This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

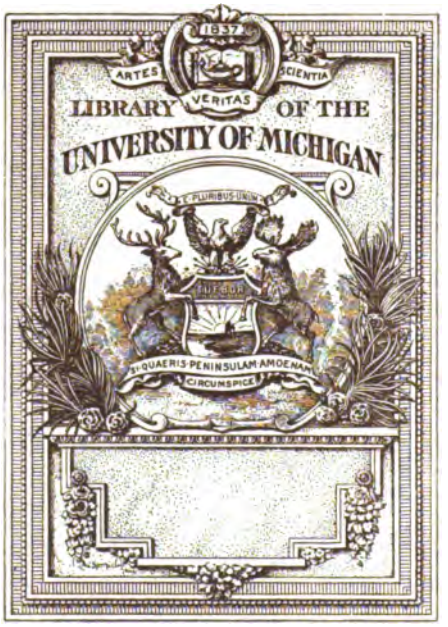
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

B 954,073


1837
ARTES
SCIENTIA
VERITAS
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
E PLURIBUS UNUM
SI QUAERIS PENINSULAM AMOENAM
CIRCUMSPICE

828
B144
B3

THE WORKS AND LIFE OF WALTER BAGEHOT

VOL. IV.

THE WORKS AND LIFE

OF

WALTER BAGEHOT

EDITED BY

MRS. RUSSELL BARRINGTON

THE WORKS IN NINE VOLUMES
THE LIFE IN ONE VOLUME
VOL. IV. OF THE WORKS

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
FOURTH AVENUE & 30TH STREET, NEW YORK
BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS
1915

CONTENTS OF VOLUME IV.

	PAGE
William Pitt (1861)	1
The Prince Consort (1861)	39
Count your Enemies and Economise your Expenditure (1862)	41
Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1862)	57
The Ignorance of Man (1862)	88
Mr. Clough's Poems (1862)	113
Bolingbroke as a Statesman (1863)	135
What Lord Lyndhurst really was (1863)	181
Sir George Cornewall Lewis (1863)	187
The Tribute at Hereford to Sir G. C. Lewis (1864)	225
Sterne and Thackeray (1864)	229
Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning: or Pure, Ornate, and Grotesque Art in English Poetry (1864)	267
Cæsarism as it Existed in 1865	316
Mr. Cobden (1865)	323
Lord Palmerston (1865)	329
Boscastle	334

285933

WILLIAM PITT.[1]

(1861.)

LORD STANHOPE'S Life of Mr. Pitt has both the excellences and the defects which we should expect from him, and neither of them are what we expect in a great historical writer of the present age. Even simple readers are becoming aware that historical investigations, which used to be a sombre and respectable calling, is now an audacious pursuit. Paradoxes are very bold and very numerous. Many of the recognised "good people" in history have become bad, and all the very bad people have become rather good. We have palliations of Tiberius, eulogies on Henry VIII., devotional exercises to Cromwell, and fulsome adulation of Julius Cæsar and of the first Napoleon. The philosophy of history is more alarming still. One school sees in it but a gradual development of atheistic belief, another threatens to resolve it all into "the three simple agencies, starch, fibrin, and albumen". But in these exploits of audacious ingenuity and specious learning Lord Stanhope has taken no part. He is not anxious to be original. He travels, if possible, in the worn track of previous historians; he tells a plain tale in an easy plain way; he shrinks from wonderful novelties; with the cautious scepticism of true common sense, he is always glad to find that the conclusions at which he arrives coincide with those of former inquirers. His style is characteristic of his matter. He narrates with a gentle sense and languid accuracy, very different from the stimulating rhetoric and exciting brilliancy of his more renowned contemporaries.

In the present case Lord Stanhope has been very fortunate

[1] *Life of the Right Honourable William Pitt.* By Earl Stanhope, author of the *History of England from the Peace of Utrecht.*

both in his subject and his materials. Mr. Pitt has never had even a decent biographer, though the peculiarities of his career are singularly inviting to literary ambition. His life had much of the solid usefulness of modern times, and not a little also of the romance of old times. He was skilled in economical reform, but retained some of the majesty of old-world eloquence. He was as keen in small figures as a rising politician now; yet he was a despotic Premier at an age when, in these times, a politician could barely aspire to be an Under-Secretary. It is not wonderful that Lord Stanhope should have been attracted to a subject which is so interesting in itself, and which lies so precisely in the direction of his previous studies. From his high standing and his personal connections, he has been able to add much to our minuter knowledge. He has obtained from various quarters many valuable letters which have not been published before. There is a whole series from George III. to Mr. Pitt, and a scarcely less curious series from Mr. Pitt to his mother. We need not add that Lord Stanhope has digested his important materials with great care; that he has made of them almost as much as could be made; that he has a warm admiration and a delicate respect for the great statesman of whom he is writing. His nearest approach to an ungentle feeling is a quiet dislike to the great Whig families.

Mr. Pitt is an example of one of the modes in which the popular imagination is, even in historical times, frequently and easily misled. Mankind judge of a great statesman principally by the most marked and memorable passage in his career. By chance we lately had the honour to travel with a gentleman who said, that Sir Robert Peel was the "leader of the Whigs"; and though historical evidence will always prevent common opinion from becoming so absurd as this, it is undeniable that, in the popular fancy of young men, Sir Robert Peel is the Liberal minister who repealed the corn-laws and carried Catholic emancipation. The world is forgetting that he was once the favourite leader of the old Tory party—the steady opponent of Mr. Canning, and the steady adherent of Lord Sidmouth and Lord Eldon. We remember his great reforms, of which we daily feel the benefit; we forget that, during a complete political

generation, he was the most plausible supporter of ancient prejudices, and the most decent advocate of inveterate abuses. Mr. Pitt's fate has been very similar, but far less fortunate. The event in his life most deeply implanted in the popular memory is his resistance to the French Revolution; it is this which has made him the object of affection to extreme Tories, and of suspicion and distrust to reasonable Liberals. Yet no rash inference was ever more unfounded and false. It can be proved that, in all the other parts of Mr. Pitt's life, the natural tendency of his favourite plan was uniformly Liberal; that, at the time of the French Revolution itself, he only did what the immense majority of the English people, even of the cultivated English people, deliberately desired; that he did it anxiously, with many misgivings, and in opposition to his natural inclinations; that it is very dubious whether, in the temper of the French nation and the temper of the English nation, a war between them could by possibility have been avoided at that juncture; that, in his administration and under his auspices, the spirit of legislative improvement which characterises modern times may almost be said to begin; that he was the first English minister who discussed political questions with the cultivated thoughtfulness and considerate discretion which seem to characterise us now; that, in political instruction, he was immeasurably superior to Fox, and that in the practical application of just principles to ordinary events, he was equally superior to Burke.

There are two kinds of statesmen to whom, at different times, representative government gives an opportunity and a career—dictators and administrators. There are certain men who are called in conjunctures of great danger to save the State. When national peril was imminent, all nations have felt it needful to select the best man who could be found—for better, for worse; to put unlimited trust in him; to allow him to do whatever he wished, and to leave undone whatever he did not approve of. The qualities which are necessary for a dictator are two—a commanding character and an original intellect. All other qualities are secondary. Regular industry, a conciliatory disposition, a power of logical exposition, and argumenta-

tive discussion, which are necessary to a Parliamentary statesman in ordinary times, are not essential to the selected dictator of a particular juncture. If he have force of character to overawe men into trusting him, and originality of intellect sufficient to enable him to cope with the pressing, terrible, and critical events with which he is selected to cope, it is enough. Every subordinate shortcoming, every incidental defect, will be pardoned. "Save us!" is the cry of the moment; and, in the confident hope of safety, any deficiency will be overlooked, and any frailty pardoned.

The genius requisite for a great administrator is not so imposing, but it is, perhaps, equally rare, and needs a more peculiar combination of qualities. Ordinary administrators are very common: every-day life requires and produces every-day persons. But a really great administrator thinks not only of the day but of the morrow; does not only what he must but what he wants; is eager to extirpate every abuse, and on the watch for every improvement; is on a level with the highest political thought of his time, and persuades his age to be ruled according to it—to permit him to embody it in policy and in laws. Administration in this large sense includes legislation, for it is concerned with the far-seeing regulation of future conduct, as well as with the limited management of the present. Great dictators are doubtless rare in political history; but they are not more so than great administrators, such as we have just defined them. It is not easy to manage any age; it is not easy to be on a level with the highest thought of any age; but to manage that age according to that highest thought is among the most arduous tasks of the world. The intellectual character of a dictator is noble but simple; that of a great administrator and legislator is also complex.

The exact description of Mr. Pitt is, that he had in the most complete perfection the faculties of a great administrator, and that he added to it the commanding temperament, though not the creative intellect, of a great dictator. He was tried by long and prosperous years, which exercised to the utmost his peculiar faculties, which enabled him to effect brilliant triumphs of policy and of legislation: he was tried likewise by

a terrible crisis, with which he had not the originality entirely to cope, which he did not understand as we understand it now, but in which he showed a hardihood of resolution and a consistency of action which captivated the English people, and which impressed the whole world.

A very slight survey of Mr. Pitt's career is all we have room for here; indeed, it is not easy within the compass of an article to make any survey, however slight; but we hope at least to show that peculiar training, peculiar opportunity, and peculiar ability, combined to make him what he was.

It may seem silly to observe that Mr. Pitt was the son of his father, and yet there is no doubt that it was a critical circumstance in the formation of his character. When he was born, as Lord Macaulay has described, his father's name was the most celebrated in the whole civilised world; every post brought the news of some victory or some great stroke of policy, and his imagination dwelt upon the realities before him. "I am glad I am not the eldest son," he said. "I should like to speak in the House of Commons, like papa." And there are other sayings indicating an early ambition and an early consciousness of power. There is nothing extraordinary in this. Most boys are conceited; most boys have a wonderful belief in their own power. "At sixteen," says Mr. Disraeli, "every one believes he is the most peculiar man who ever lived." And there is certainly no difficulty in imagining Mr. Disraeli thinking so. The difficulty is, not to entertain this proud belief, but to keep it; not to have these lofty visions, but to hold them. Manhood comes, and with it come the plain facts of the world. There is no illusion in them; they have a distinct teaching. "The world," they say definitely, "does not believe in you. You fancy you have a call to a great career, but no one else even imagines that you fancy it. You do not dare to say it out loud." Before the fear of ridicule and the touch of reality, the illusions of youth pass away, and with them goes all intellectual courage. We have no longer the hardihood, we have scarcely the wish to form our own creed, to think our own thoughts, to act upon our own belief; we try to be sensible, and we end in being

ordinary; we fear to be eccentric, and we end in being commonplace. It is from this fate that the son of a commanding Prime Minister is at any rate preserved; the world thinks about him; the world alludes to him. He can speak "in the grand style," and he will not be laughed at, or not much. When we wonder at the indomitable resolution and the inflexible self-reliance which Mr. Pitt through life displayed, we may lessen our wonder by remembering that he never endured the bitter ignominy of youth; that his self-confidence was never disheartened by being "an unknown man"; that he early received from fortune the inestimable permission *to be himself*.

The education of Mr. Pitt was as favourable to the development of his peculiar powers as his position. The public education of England has very great merits, and is well fitted for the cultivation of the average Englishman; but one at least of the qualities which fit it for training ordinary men unfit it for training an extraordinary man. Its greatest value to the mass of those who are brought up in it, is its influence in diminishing their self-confidence. They are early brought into a little but rough world, which effects on a small scale what the real world will afterwards effect still more thoroughly on a large one. It teaches boys who are no better than other boys, that they are no better than other boys; that the advantages of one are compensated by the advantages of others; that the world is a miscellaneous and motley medley, in which it is not easy to conquer, and over which it is impossible to rule. But it is not desirable that a young man in Pitt's position should learn this lesson. If you are to train a man to be Prime Minister at five and twenty, you must not dishearten his self-confidence, though it be overweening; you must not tame his energy, though it seem presumptuous. Ordinary men should and must be taught to fear the face of the world; they are to be guided by its laws and regulated by its manners; the one exceptional man, who is in his first youth to rule the world, must be trained not to fear it, but despise it.

The legitimate food of a self-relying nature is early solitude,

and the most stimulating solitude is solitude in the midst of society. Mr. Pitt's education was of this kind entirely. He was educated at home during his whole boyhood. He was sent to Cambridge at a most unusually early age. He lived there almost wholly with Mr. Pretyman, his tutor. "While Mr. Pitt was undergraduate," writes that gentleman, "he never omitted attending chapel morning and evening, or dining in the public hall, except when prevented by indisposition. Nor did he pass a single evening out of the college walls; indeed, most of his time was spent with me. During his whole residence at the university," Mr. Pretyman continues, "I never knew him spend an idle day, nor did he ever fail to attend me at the appointed hour." He did not make any friends, scarcely any social acquaintances till he had taken his degree. He passed very much of his time, his tutor tells us, in very severe study, and very much of it, as we may easily believe, in the most absorbing of early pleasures—the monotonous excitement of ambitious anticipation. On an inferior man, this sort of youth could have had but one effect—it must have made him a prig. But it had not that effect on Pitt. It contributed to make him a shy, haughty, and inaccessible man. Such he emerged from Cambridge, and such he continued through life to be; but he was preserved from the characteristic degradation of well-intentioned and erudite youth by two great counteracting influences,—a strong sense of humour and a genuine interest in great subjects. His sense of fun was, indeed, disguised from the vulgar by a rigid mask of grave dignity; but in private it was his strongest characteristic. "Don't tell me," he is said to have remarked, "of a man's being able to talk sense; every one can talk sense; can he talk nonsense?" And Mr. Wilberforce, the most cheerful of human beings, who had seen the most amusing society of his generation, always declared that Pitt's wit was the best which he had ever known. And it was likely to be; humour gains much by constant suppression, and at no time of life was Pitt ever wanting in dexterous words. No man who really cares for great things, and who sees the laughable side of little things, ever becomes a "prig".

While at Cambridge Pitt likewise paid, as his tutor tells us, great attention to what are now, in popular estimation, the characteristic studies of the place. His attainments in mathematics were probably not much like the elaborate and exact knowledge which the higher wranglers now yearly carry away from the university; but they were considerable for his time, and they comprehended the most instructive part of the subject, the first principles; a vague hope, too, is expressed that he may read Newton's *Principia* "after some summer circuit," which, as we may easily suppose, was not realised.

Though the tutor's information is not very exact, we may accept his general testimony that Pitt was a good mathematician, according to the academic standing of that day. There is, indeed, strong corroborative evidence of the fact in Mr. Pitt's financial speeches. It is not easy to draw out the evidence in writing, and it would be very tiresome to read the evidence if it were drawn out; but a skilful observer of the contrast between educated and uneducated language will find in Pitt many traces of mathematical studies. Raw argument and common-sense correctness come by nature, but only a preliminary education can give the final edge to accuracy in statement, and the last nicety to polished and penetrating discussion. In later life, the facile use of financial rhetoric was as familiar to Mr. Pitt as to Mr. Gladstone.

His classical studies were pursued upon a plan suggested by his father, which was certainly well adapted for the particular case, though it would not be good for mankind in general. A sufficient experience proves that no one can be taught any language thoroughly and accurately except by composition in it; and Mr. Pitt had apparently never practised any sort of composition in Greek or Latin, whether verse or prose. But, for the purpose of disciplining a student in *his own* language, the reverse practice of translating from the classical languages is the best single expedient which has ever been made use of. And to this Mr. Pitt was trained by his father from early boyhood. He was taught to read off the classics into the best English he could find, never inserting a word with which he

was not satisfied, but waiting till he found one with which he *was* satisfied. By constant practice he became so ready that he never stopped at all; the right word always presented itself immediately. When he was asked in later life, how he had acquired the mellifluous abundance of appropriate language with which he amazed and charmed the House of Commons, it was to this suggestion of his father that he at once imputed it.

To the probably unconscious influence of the same instructor we may ascribe his early interest in Parliamentary conflict. We have before quoted the naïve expression of his boyish desire to be in the House of Commons. There is a still more curious story of him in very early youth. It is said, "He was introduced, on the steps of the throne in the House of Lords, to Mr. Fox, who was his senior by ten years, and already in the fulness of his fame. Fox used afterwards to relate that, as the discussion proceeded, Pitt repeatedly turned to him, and said, 'But surely, Mr. Fox, that might be met thus'; or, 'Yes, but he lays himself open to retort'. What the particular criticisms were, Fox had forgotten; but he said that he was much struck at the time by the precocity of a lad who through the whole sitting was thinking only how all the speeches on both sides could be answered."

Nor were his political studies confined to the studious cultivation of oratorical language, or to a thorough acquisition of the art of argumentative fence: he attended also to the *substance* of political science. He was the first great English statesman who read, understood, and valued *The Wealth of Nations*. Fox had "no great opinion of *those* reasonings"; and the doctrines of free trade, though present, like all great political ideas, to the overflowing mind of Burke, were, like all his ideas, at the daily mercy of his eager passions and his intense and vivid imagination. Mr. Pitt, as it would seem, while still at college, acquired and arranged them with the collected consistency which was the characteristic of his mind. So thorough a training in the superficial accomplishments, the peculiar associations, and the abstract studies of political life, has not perhaps fallen to the lot of any other English statesman.

Nor was the political opportunity of Mr. Pitt at all inferior

to his political training. The history of the first twenty years of the reign of George III. is a history of his struggles with the aristocratic proprietors of parliamentary boroughs. Neither the extension of the power of the Crown, nor the maintenance of the political ascendency of the Whig families, was very popular with the nation at large; the popular element in the Constitution was for the most part neutral in the conflict; it reserved the greater part of its influence for objects more interesting to itself; but between the two parties, between the Crown and the great borough proprietors, the strife was eager, intense, and unremitting.

As the present writer has elsewhere explained, the situation in which a constitutional king was placed under the old system of an unreformed Parliament was more than an energetic man could endure. According to the theory of that Government, the patronage of the Crown was to be used to purchase votes in Parliament, and to maintain a Parliamentary majority by constant bargains with borough proprietors.

"But who is to use the patronage? The theory assumes that it is to be used by the minister of the day. According to it, the head of the party which is predominant in Parliament is to employ the patronage of the Crown for the purpose of confirming that predominance. But suppose that the Crown chooses to object to this; suppose that the king for the time being should say, 'This patronage is mine; the places in question are places in my service; the pensions in question are pensions from me. I will myself have at least some share in the influence that is acquired by the conferring of those pensions and the distribution of those places.' George III. actually did say this. He was a king in one respect among a thousand; he was willing to do the work of a Secretary of the Treasury; his letters for very many years are filled with the petty details of patronage; he directed who should have what, and stipulated who should not have anything. This interference of the king must evidently in theory, and did certainly in fact, destroy the efficiency of the alleged expedient. Very much of the patronage of the Crown went, not to the adherents of the prime minister, because they were his adherents, but to the king's friends, because they were his friends. Many writers have been very severe on George III. for taking the course which he did take, and have frequently repeated the well-known maxims, which show that what he did was a deviation from the Constitution. Very likely it was; but what is the use of a Constitution which takes no account of the ordinary motives of human nature? It was inevitable that an ambitious king, who had industry enough to act as he

did, would so act. Let us consider his position. He was invested with authority which was apparently great. He was surrounded by noblemen and gentlemen who passed their life in paying him homage, and in professing perhaps excessive doctrines of loyal obedience to him. When the Duke of Devonshire, or the Duke of Bedford, or the Duke of Newcastle, approached the royal closet, they implied by words and manner that he had immeasurably more power than they had. In fact, it was expected that he should have immeasurably less. It was expected that, though these noblemen daily acknowledged that he was their superior, he should constantly act as if he were their inferior. The prime minister was in reality appointed by them, and it was expected that the king should do what the prime minister told him; that he should assent to measures on which he was not consulted; that he should make peace when Mr. Grenville said peace was right; that he should make war whenever Mr. Grenville said war was right; that he should allow the offices of his household and the dignities of his court to be used as a means for the support of cabinets whose members he disliked, and whose policy he disapproved of. It is evident that no man who was not imbecile would be content with such a position. It is not difficult to bear to be without power, it is not very difficult to bear to have only the mockery of power; but it is unbearable to have real power, and to be told that you must content yourself with the mockery of it; it is unendurable to have in your hands an effectual instrument of substantial influence, and also to act day by day as a pageant, without any influence whatever. Human nature has never endured this, and we may be quite sure that it never will endure it. It is a fundamental error in the 'esoteric theory' of the Tory party, that it assumed the king and the prime minister to be always of the same mind, while they often were of different minds."[1]

By a series of stratagems George III. at last obtained, in the person of Lord North, a minister who combined a sufficient amount of Parliamentary support with an unlimited devotion to the royal pleasure. He was a minister of great ability, great Parliamentary tact, unbounded good humour, and no firmness. He yielded everything to the intense, eager, petty incisiveness of his sovereign. The king was the true minister for all purposes of policy and business. Lord North was only the talking minister of the present French Assemblies, who is bound to explain and to defend measures which he did not suggest, and about which he was not consulted.

It is difficult to say how long Lord North's Government

[1] *Essays on Parliamentary Reform*, p. 154. By Walter Bagehot. Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1883.

might not have continued, if it had not been for the military calamities of the American War. That war had been very popular at its commencement, and continued popular as long as it was likely to be successful: it became unpopular as soon as it was likely to fail. The merchants began to murmur at the stoppage of trade. The country gentlemen began to murmur at the oppressive burden of war-taxes. The nation began to reconsider its opinion as to the justice of the quarrel, as soon as it appeared that our military efforts would probably be disastrous. Lord North shared in these feelings; he did not believe the war would succeed; no longer hoped it would succeed; no longer thought that there was any motive for continuing to carry it on, but for several years he did continue to carry it on. The will of George III. was a very efficient force on every one just about him, and his personal ascendency over many men intellectually far his superiors is a curious example of the immense influence of a distinct judgment and inflexible decision, with fair abilities and indefatigable industry, and placed in a close contact with great men and great affairs.

At length, in March, 1782, the calamitous issue of the American War became too evident, and Lord North resigned. Lord Holland gives us a curious history of the mode in which he announced to the House that he was no longer Prime Minister.

"I have heard my uncle Fitzpatrick give a very diverting account of the scene that passed in the House of Commons on the day of Lord North's resignation, which happened to be a remarkably cold day, with a fall of snow. A motion of Lord Surrey's for the dismissal of ministers, stood for that day, and the Whigs were anxious that it should come on before the resignation of Lord North was officially announced, that his removal from office might be more manifestly and formally the act of the House of Commons. He and Lord Surrey rose at the same instant. After much clamour, disorder, and some insignificant speeches on order, Mr. Fox, with great quickness and address, moved, as the most regular method of extricating the House from its embarrassment, 'That Lord Surrey be now heard'. But Lord North, with yet more admirable presence of mind, mixed with pleasantry, rose immediately and said, 'I rise to speak to that motion'; and, as his reason for opposing it, stated his resignation and the dissolution of the Ministry. The House, satisfied, became impatient, and after some ineffectual efforts of speakers on both sides to procure a hear-

ing, an adjournment took place. Snow was falling and the night tremendous. All the members' carriages were dismissed, and Mrs. Bennet's room at the door was crowded. But Lord North's carriage was waiting. He put into it one or two of his friends, whom he had invited to go home with him; and turning to the crowd, chiefly composed of his bitter enemies, in the midst of their triumph, exclaimed, in this hour of defeat and supposed mortification, with admirable good humour and pleasantry, 'I have my carriage. You see, gentlemen, the advantage of being in the secret. Good-night.'"

Such acquiescent *bonhomie* is admirable, no doubt; but easy good-nature is no virtue for a man of action, least of all for a practical politician in critical times. It was Lord North's "happy temper" which first made him the mean slave of George III., which afterwards induced him to ally himself with the most virulent assailants of that monarch, and, at a preceding period, of himself.

When Lord North resigned, it was natural that the leaders of the Opposition should come at once into predominant power; but a ministerial crisis in the early part of George III.'s reign was never permitted to proceed in what is now fixed as the constitutional etiquette. The King always interfered with it. On this occasion, the only political party who could take office was that which, under the judicious guidance of Lord Rockingham, and supported by the unequalled oratory of Fox and Burke, had consistently opposed the American War. But the leaders of this party were personally disliked by George III. Lord Rockingham he had once before called "one of the most insignificant noblemen in my service". Mr. Fox, from a curious combination of causes, he hated. Accordingly, though it was necessary for him to treat with Lord Rockingham and his friends, he did not treat with them directly. He employed as an intermediate agent Lord Shelburne, the father of the present Marquis of Lansdowne, a politician whom it is not difficult to describe, but whom it is difficult really to understand. Policemen tell us that there is such a character as a "reputed thief," who has never been convicted of any particular act of thievery. Lord Shelburne was precisely that character in political life; every one always said he was dishonest, but no particular act of dishonesty has

ever been brought home to him. It is not for us now to discuss the dubious peculiarities of so singular a character. But it will be admitted, that it was a most unfortunate one for conducting the delicate personal negotiations inevitable on the formation of a Cabinet, and that it specially unfitted the person believed to possess it to be a good go-between a king who hated the Opposition and an Opposition who distrusted the King. The inevitable result followed: every member of the incoming party was displeased with the King; every one disbelieved the assertions of Lord Shelburne; every one distrusted the solidity of a ministry constructed in a manner so anomalous. A ministry, however, was constructed, of which Lord Shelburne and Lord Rockingham were both members; and both, Mr. Fox said, intended to be Prime Ministers.

Lord Rockingham must evidently have been a man of very fine and delicate judgment. He could not speak in the House of Lords, and his letters are rather awkwardly expressed; but those who compare the history of the Whig party for some years before his death with the history of that party for some years after it, and those who compare the career of Burke for the same two periods, will perceive that both over the turbulence of the great party and the turbulence of the great orator the same almost invisible discretion exercised a guiding and restraining control. After Lord Rockingham's death, both the Whig party and Mr. Burke committed great errors and fell into lamentable excesses, which were entirely unlike anything which happened while he was yet alive. If he had been permitted to exercise a composing influence, it is possible that the ministry we have described might have lasted; but, unfortunately, within three months after its formation he fell ill and died. Mr. Fox, who had just been quarrelling with Lord Shelburne, refused to serve under him and sent in his resignation; and his example was followed by Burke, and by most of the followers of Lord Rockingham.

Lord Shelburne, however, still intended to be Prime Minister. The King was in his favour. The Whigs had no great aristocratic leader. The Duke of Portland, who was put forward as such, had no powers of speech and but feeble powers

of thought. There was no difference of political opinion which need have separated any Whig from Shelburne. He was therefore justified in hoping that if he persevered, he might rally round him in no long time the greater portion of the Whig party, notwithstanding the secession of its present leaders. He doubtless hoped also, by taking advantage of the various influences of the Crown, to attach to himself very many of the followers of Lord North, who were the old adherents of the Crown. But these were anticipations only. For the moment he was more completely separated from the Parliamentary ability of his age than any minister has since been. He came into office in opposition to Lord North and one great party; he remained in office in opposition to Fox and Burke, the leaders of the other great party. The trained leaders of the old Ministry and the trained leaders of the old Opposition were both opposed to him. If he decided to remain Prime Minister, it was necessary for him to take some bold step. He did so. He made Mr. Pitt Chancellor of the Exchequer and the leader of the House of Commons, though he was but twenty-three.

Such singular good fortune has never happened to any English statesman since Parliamentary government in this country has been consolidated into its present form, and it is very unlikely that anything like it can ever happen again. Perhaps no man of twenty-three could get through the quantity of work that is now required to fill the two offices of Finance Minister and leader of the House of Commons. In Pitt's time the Chancellor of the Exchequer (he himself tells us) needed no private secretary; he had no business requiring any. The leader of the House of Commons did not even require one-tenth part of the ready available miscellaneous information which he must now have at his command, and most of which cannot be learned from any books. To fill the offices which Mr. Pitt filled at twenty-three, it would in this age be necessary that a man should have a trained faculty of transacting business rapidly, which no man of twenty-three can have; and that he should have also a varied knowledge of half a hundred subjects, which no college can teach, and which no book of

reference will ever contain. Mr. Pitt, however, met with no difficulty. Though the finances of the country had been disordered by the American war, and though the Ministry was daily assailed by the dexterous good-humour of Lord North and the vehement invectives of Fox and Burke, "the boy," as they called him, was successful in his Budget, and successful in his management of the House of Commons. It soon, however, became evident that Lord Shelburne's Ministry could not stand long. There were three parties in the House, and a coalition of any two was sufficient to outnumber any one. According to a calculation preserved in a letter from Gibbon, everything depended on the decision of Mr. Fox. If he returned to the Government, it would be strong; if he allied himself with Lord North, it must fail. He did ally himself with Lord North, and Lord Shelburne resigned.

The coalition between Fox and Lord North is not defended even by Lord John Russell, who defends almost every act in the political life of his great hero. Indeed, it was not likely that he would defend it; for to it we owe the almost unbroken subjection of the Whigs, and the almost unbroken reign of the Tories, for five and twenty years.

No political alliance in English history has been more unpopular than this coalition. For once the King and the people were on the same side, and that side the right side. During by far the greater part of his reign the wishes of George III. were either opposed to the wishes of his people; or the wishes of the two, though identical, were pernicious. During the first part of his reign his attempts to increase the royal influence were generally unpopular; during the latter part, he and his people were both favourable to the American War and to the French War, with what result history shows. But at the period at which we are speaking, both the prominent prejudices of the King, and the deepest feelings of the people were offended by the same event. The Coalition deeply annoyed the King. It was hateful to him that his favourite, Lord North, who had been his confidential minister for years, who was enriched with the marks of his bounty and good-will, who was the leader of many politicians, always biassed in favour of the Crown, and

always anxious to support its influence, if they could, should after all ally himself with Mr. Fox, who had opposed the Crown for years; who had called its latent influence "an infernal spirit"; who was the leader of the party opposed to the American War, and therefore, in the King's view, of the party which had advocated treason and abetted the disruption of the empire; who, worse than all, was the companion and encourager of the Prince of Wales in every species of dissipation; who introduced him to haunts and countenanced him in habits which made the very heart of an economical and decorous monarch horrified and angry: who at that very moment was endeavouring to make "capital," as we should now say, out of the political prospects and present influence of his profligate associate. George III. used to call the "Coalition Ministry" his son's ministry; and he could not embody his detestation of it in terms more expressive, to those who knew their meaning. On the other hand, the people were not unnaturally offended also. The Coalition brought into very clear prominence the most characteristic weakness of our unreformed Constitution. Though it professed to be, and really was, a popular Constitution, the people could not be induced to believe that they had much concern in it. The members chosen by popular election were a minority; those nominated by aristocratic and indirect influence were a majority. Accordingly, most men believed, or were prone to believe, that the struggles in Parliament were faction-fights for place and power; that the interest of the nation had little to do with them, or nothing; that they were contests for political power, and for the rich pecuniary rewards which influential office then conferred. The Coalition seemed to prove that this was so even to demonstration. If there ever had been a *bonâ fide*, and not a simulated, struggle in Parliament, it was the struggle between Fox and Lord North. They had opposed one another for years; Fox had heaped on Lord North every term of invective, opprobrium, and contempt; Lord North had said everything which a good-natured and passive man *could* say in reply. They had taken different sides both on the obvious question which had been the dividing and critical one of the

last few years, and on the latent question which was the real one underlying the greater part of the controversies of the age and giving to them most of their importance. Lord North was the great Parliamentary advocate of the American War; Fox was its most celebrated and effective opponent. Lord North was the most decent agent, and the most successful co-operator, whom George III. had yet found in his incessant policy of maintaining and augmenting the power of the Crown. Fox was known to be opposed to that policy with all his mind, soul, and strength; he was known to have heaped upon that policy every bitter term of contempt, opprobrium, and execration which the English language contains; he was known to have incurred the bitter hatred of George III. by so doing. With these facts before them, what could the nation infer when they saw these two statesmen combine for the evident purpose of obtaining immediate office? They could only say what they did. They said at once that the Coalition must be dishonest if the previous opposition had been real, and that the coalescing statesmen were utterly untrustworthy if that opposition had been simulated.

The Government of the Coalition was not, however, destined to be durable. George III. was a dangerous man to drive to extremity. Though without great creative ability, he had dexterous powers of political management, cultivated by long habit and experience; he had an eager obstinacy allied to the obstinacy of insanity; it was not safe to try him too far. The Coalition Government, however, tried him as far as it was possible. They framed an India Bill, giving the patronage of India to commissioners, to be from time to time nominated by Parliament, to be irremovable by the Crown, the first of whom were to be nominated by themselves. The King was enraged at a scheme so injurious to his secret influence. He considered that it was a scheme for enabling Mr. Fox to buy votes in Parliament. Lord Fitzwilliam, his intimate political friend, was to be at the head of the new Board; and it was expected, perhaps intended, that the Board should be an independent instrument of Parliamentary power at the service of the aristocratic Whigs, and in daily opposition

to the influence of the Crown—to that personal influence which George III. had all his life been hoarding and acquiring. The people were almost as much enraged at the scheme as the King himself. They thought that the politicians who had just formed a corrupt coalition to obtain office were now providing a corrupt expedient for retaining that office. "Being dishonest themselves," it was said, "they are providing themselves with the means of purchasing the votes of others who are dishonest likewise." The exact value of these accusations we have not space to estimate now; something might certainly be said in extenuation, if it were needful, but at the time the popular feeling was powerfully excited by them; they were expressed by Pitt with marvellous force and marvellous variety, and re-echoed through the nation.

The Parliamentary influence of the Coalition Government, which was supported by the greater part of the borough proprietors, both Whig and Tory, was, however, sufficient to carry their India Bill through the House of Commons by majorities which would now be considered very large. It reached the House of Lords, and would have passed that House too, if George III. had not taken one of the most curious steps in our constitutional history. He wrote on a card: "His Majesty allowed Earl Temple to say that whoever voted for the India Bill was not only not his friend, but would be considered by him as an enemy; and if these words were not strong enough, Earl Temple might use whatever words he might deem stronger and more to the purpose".

Such was the influence of the Crown, such was especially the personal influence which George III. had acquired by steady industry and incessant attention to the personalities of politics, that the fate of the India Bill in the Lords very soon became dubious. "The bishops wavered;" the staunchest followers of Lord North especially, being high Tories, became uncertain; and in the end the Bill was rejected by a majority of ninety-five over seventy-six.

Nor did the King's active influence stop here. The Coalition Ministry did not resign; although their principal measure had been rejected in the Lords, they kept their places; they

induced the House of Commons to resolve that it was a breach of the privilege of Parliament to attempt to influence votes in either House by announcing "any opinion or pretended opinion of his Majesty". The Ministry was passive in its place; but George III. was never deterred by minor difficulties. He sent his commands at midnight to Mr. Fox and Lord North to deliver up the seals of office, and to send them by their under-secretaries, as he must decline to see them in person. By this Parliamentary *coup d'état* he broke up an administration which, though unpopular in the country, was supported by the "great owners" of Parliamentary influence and an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons.

But who was to come in? That the King could turn out the old Ministry was very clear, for he had done so; but that he could form a Ministry that could last in such circumstances seemed unlikely; that he could form any Ministry at all was not evident. Political expectation was very eager. As soon as the House met on the day after the midnight dismissal, a new writ was moved for the borough of Appleby, "in the room of the Right Honourable William Pitt, who, since his election, has accepted the office of first Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer". The announcement was received with laughter, for it seemed unlikely that an ambitious boy (such was the speech of the time) should be able to carry on the government, and to lead the House of Commons in the face of an adverse majority, in direct opposition to the most experienced statesmen, the most practised debaters, and the most skilful manœuvrers of his age.

Mr. Pitt was only twenty-five, and he had no one to rely on. Mr. Dundas was a useful subordinate and an efficient man of business, but he was not a great statesman or a great orator, and he *was* a Scotch adventurer. In the Lords, Mr. Pitt was confident of the support of Lord Temple, who had effected the defeat of the India Bill by use of the King's name; but Lord Temple wanted to be paid. He had great borough connections, which gave him permanent claims on every Government; he had just turned out the old Government, which gave him a peculiar claim upon the favour of the new. He asked

for a dukedom, and was refused. The King thought he had asked too much, and perhaps believed that it would be most dangerous at that critical moment to give the highest of honorary rewards to the principal agent in an alarming act of royal influence. At any rate, the application was declined, and Lord Temple resigned. Mr. Pitt was thus left almost alone. His Cabinet consisted but of seven persons, and he himself was the only member of the House of Commons among those seven.

Everybody expected that Parliament would be immediately dissolved. As Mr. Pitt was evidently in a minority in the House of Commons which then existed, it was confidently believed that he would at once see whether he would not have a majority in a new House of Commons. He was too wary, however, to do so. In that age, public opinion formed itself slowly and declared itself slowly. The nation, as far as it had an opinion, was in favour of the new administration; but in many parts of the country there was no opinion. Delay was in favour of the side which had the advantage in telling argument; and so strong were the objections of reasonable and moderate men to the coalition between Fox and Lord North —so entirely was their India Bill interpreted by the help of that connection, and regarded in its relation to it—that every day's discussion made converts. The members for close boroughs, and for counties in which individual interest predominated, were, it is true, a majority in the House of Commons, and they adhered for the most part to the Coalition. But the strength so obtained was always weak at a trying crisis. The same influences acted on the borough proprietors which acted upon others, and they never liked to be opposed to the national will when it was distinctly declared. Nor had the extreme partisans of either party ever liked the coalition of the two parties. The warmest Whigs were alienated from Fox, and the strongest Tories were alienated from Lord North. The majority of Fox began to waver, and the minority of Pitt began to augment. Every division showed a tendency in the same direction. Pitt maintained the struggle with dauntless courage and unbounded dialectical dexterity, against all the

orators in the House of Commons. The event began to be doubtful. In the unreformed Parliament no more was necessary. A large section of every part was attached to it by the hope of patronage; it had been bought by promises of that patronage. As the present writer has elsewhere explained, the strength so obtained was unstable.

"It especially failed at the moment at which it was especially wanted. A majority in Parliament which is united by a sincere opinion, and is combined to carry out that opinion, is in some sense secure. As long as that opinion is unchanged, it will remain; it can only be destroyed by weakening the conviction which binds it together. A majority which is obtained by the employment of patronage is very different; it is combined mainly by *an expectation*. Sir Robert Walpole, the great master in the art of dispensing patronage, defined gratitude as an anticipation of future favours; he meant that the majority which maintained his administration was collected, not by recollection, but by hope; they thought not so much of favours which were past as of favours which were to come. At a critical moment this bond of union was ordinarily weak." [1]

As soon as it seemed likely that Mr. Pitt would be victorious, the selfish part of the followers of the Coalition—a very large part—began to go over to Mr. Pitt. The last motion of Mr. Fox was carried by a majority of *one*.

Mr. Pitt then saw that his time had come; he dissolved Parliament, and his triumph was complete. The popular feeling was overwhelming. It prevailed even in the strongholds of the Whig aristocracy. "Thus in Norfolk," says Lord Stanhope, "the late member had been Mr. Coke, lord of the vast domains of Holkham, a gentleman who, according to his own opinion, as stated in his address to the county, had played 'a distinguished part' in opposing the American War. But notwithstanding his alleged claims of distinction, and his much more certain claims of property, Mr. Coke found it necessary to decline the contest." But of all the contests of this period, the most important in that point of view was for the county of York. That great county, not yet at election times severed into Ridings, had been under the sway of the Whig Houses. Bolton Abbey, Castle Howard, and Wentworth

[1] *Essays on Parliamentary Reform*, p. 157. By Walter Bagehot. Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1883.

Park had claimed the right to dictate at the hustings. It was not till 1780 that the spirit of the country rose. "Hitherto" —so in that year spoke Sir George Savile—"I have been elected in Lord Rockingham's dining-room. Now I am returned by my constituents." And in 1784 the spirit of the country rose higher still. In 1784 the independent freeholders of Yorkshire boldly confronted the great houses, and insisted on returning, in conjunction with the heir of Duncombe Park, a banker's son, of few years and of scarcely tried abilities, though destined to a high place in his country's annals—Mr. Wilberforce. With the help of the country gentlemen, they raised the vast sum of £18,662 for the expense of the election; and so great was their show of numbers and of resolution, that the candidates upon the other side did not venture to stand a contest. Wilberforce was also returned at the head of the poll by his former constituents at Hull. "I can never congratulate you enough on such glorious success," wrote the Prime Minister to his young friend. One hundred and sixty followers of Mr. Fox lost their seats, and were called "Fox's martyrs". The majority for Pitt in the new Parliament was complete, overwhelming, and enthusiastic.

The constitutional aspect of the events of 1784 has been much discussed, and well merits discussion. It is certain that George III. did much that was, according to the good notions now fixedly established, thoroughly unconstitutional; it is certain that scarcely any one will, upon any constitutional doctrines, new or old, defend the "card" displayed by Lord Temple. But, if we had room to argue the subject, we think it might be shown that it would have been inexpedient to apply, in the year 1784, the strict constitutional maxims on which we should act in the year 1861; that the beneficial relations, and that the inevitable relations of the Parliament and the Crown, were different then from what they are now; that, under such an aristocratic Legislature as the unreformed Parliament principally was, it was needful that the Crown should sometimes intervene, when the opinion of Parliament was opposed to the opinion of the people; that, in times when public opinion was formed but slowly, it was advisable that

the Crown should do so, not by an instant dissolution of the House of Commons, as we should now exact, but by a deferred dissolution, which would enable the thinking part of the community to reflect, and give the whole country, far and near, time to form a real judgment.

But, at present, we have to deal with the events of 1784, not in their relation to the Constitution of England, but in their relation to the life of Mr. Pitt. They were the completion of his opportunity. But a short time previously the political isolation of Lord Shelburne had made him Chancellor of the Exchequer at a boyish age; the isolation of George III. now made him Prime Minister while still very young. The first good fortune would have been a marvel in the life of any other man, but was nothing to the marvel of the second. By a strange course of great incidents, he was in the most commanding position which an English subject has ever occupied since Parliamentary government was thoroughly established in the country. The victory was so complete, that the mercenaries of the enemy had deserted to his standard. The Crown was necessarily on his side, for he alone stood between George III. and the hated Coalition, which he had discarded and insulted; the people were on his side, from a hatred of the official corruption of which they considered his opponents to be the representatives and the embodiments, from a firm belief in his true integrity, from a proud admiration of his single-handed courage and audacious self-reliance. He had the power to do what he would.

Nor was this all. The opportunity was not only a great opportunity, but was an opportunity in the hands of a *young man*. Half of our greatest statesmen would have been wholly unprepared for it. When Lord Palmerston was in office in the spring of 1857 with a large majority, a shrewd observer, now no longer among us, said, "Well, it is a large majority; but what is he to do with it?" He did not know himself; by paltry errors and frivolous haughtiness he frittered it away immediately. An old man of the world has no great objects, no telling enthusiasm, no large proposals, no noble reforms; his advice is that of the old banker, "Live, sir, from day to

day, and don't trouble yourself!" Years of acquiescing in proposals as to which he has not been consulted, of voting for measures which he did not frame, and in the wisdom of which he often did not believe, of arguing for proposals from half of which he dissents—usually de-intellectualise a Parliamentary statesman before he comes to half his power. From all this Pitt was exempt. He came to great power with a fresh mind. And not only so; he came into power with the cultivated thought of a new generation. Too many of us scarcely remember how young a man he was. He was born in 1759, and might have well been in the vigour of life in 1830. Lord Sidmouth, his contemporary, did not die till after 1840; he was younger than his cousin, Mr. Thomas Grenville, who long represented in London society the traditions of the past, and who died in 1846. He governed men of the generation before him. Alone among English statesmen, while yet a youth he was governing middle-aged men. He had the power of applying the eager thought of five and twenty, of making it rule over the petty knowledge and trained acquiescence of five and fifty. Alone as yet, and alone perhaps for ever in our Parliamentary history, while his own mind was still original, while his own spirit was still unbroken, he was able to impose an absolute yoke on acquiescent spirits whom the world had broken for him.

We have expended so much space on a delineation of the peculiar opportunities which Mr. Pitt enjoyed, that we must be very concise in showing how he used them. Three subjects then needed the attention of a great statesman, though none of them were so pressing as to force themselves on the attention of a little statesman. These were, our economical and financial legislation, the imperfection of our Parliamentary representation, and the unhappy condition of Ireland. Pitt dealt with all three.

Our economical legislation was partly in an uncared-for state, and partly in an ill-cared-for state. Our customs laws were a chaos of confusion. Innumerable Acts of Parliament had been passed on temporary occasions and for temporary purposes; blunders had been discovered in them; other Acts

were passed to amend those blunders; those other Acts contained other blunders; new corrective legislation was required, and here too there were errors, omissions, and imperfections. And in so far as our economical legislation was based upon a theory, that theory was a very mistaken one; it was the theory of Protection. The first duty of the English Legislature, it was believed, was to develop English industry and to injure foreign industry. Our manufactures, it was thought, could be made better by Acts of Parliament; the manufactures of our rivals, it was believed, could be made worse. The industry of the nation worked in a complicated network of fetters and bonds.

Mr. Pitt applied himself vigorously to this chaos. He brought in a series of resolutions consolidating our customs laws, of which the inevitable complexity may be estimated by their number. They amounted to 133, and the number of Acts of Parliament which they restrained or completed was much greater. He attempted, and successfully, to apply the principles of Free Trade, the principles which he was the first of English statesmen to learn from Adam Smith, to the actual commerce of the country, and to the part of our commerce which afforded the greatest temptations to a philosophic statesman, and presented the greatest accumulation of irritable and stupid prejudice. France and England were near one another, but had no trade with one another; no such trade, at least, as two countries so different in soil, in climate, and in natural aptitude, ought to have. So far from either nation much wishing to trade with the other, neither wished to depend on the other for anything. The national dignity was supposed to be compromised by buying from an ancient rival. Mr. Pitt, however, framed a treaty which, if its consequences had not been swept away with so much else, both good and evil, in the European storm of the French Revolution, would have been quoted as the true commencement of Free Trade legislation; would have been referred to as we now refer to the tentative reforms of Huskisson, and to the earlier Budgets of Sir Robert Peel. So little was the subject then understood, even by those most likely to understand it, that both Fox and

Burke opposed the treaty with virulence and vehemence; declaring that France was our natural enemy, and that it was unworthy of any one who pretended to be a statesman to create a "peddling traffic," and maintain "huckstering" relations with her.

The financial reputation of Pitt has greatly suffered from the absurd praise which was once lavished on the worst part of it. The dread of national ruin from the augmentation of the National Debt was a sort of nightmare in that age; the evil was apparent, and the counteracting force was not seen. No one perceived that English industry was yearly growing with an accelerating rapidity; no one foresaw that in a few years it would be aided by a hundred wonderful inventions—by the innumerable results of applied science; no one comprehended that the national estate was augmenting far faster than the national burden. The popular mind was apprehensive, and wished to see some remedy applied to what seemed to be an evident and dangerous evil. Mr. Pitt sympathised with the general apprehension, and created the well-known *Sinking Fund.* He proposed to apply annually a certain fixed sum to the payment of the debt, which was in itself excellent; but he omitted to provide real money to be so paid. The only source out of which debt can be defrayed, as every one now understands, is a surplus revenue; out of an empty exchequer no claims can ever be liquidated by possibility: an excess of income over outlay is a prerequisite of a true repayment. Mr. Pitt, however, not only did not see this, but persuaded a whole generation that it was not so. He proposed to borrow the money to pay off the debt, and fancied that he thus diminished it. He had framed a puzzle in compound interest, which deceived himself, and every one who was entrusted with the national finances, for very many years.

The exposure of this financial juggle, for though not intended to be so, such in fact it was, has reacted very unfavourably upon Mr. Pitt's deserved fame. It was so long said "that he was a great financier *because* he invented the Sinking Fund," that it came at last to be believed that he could not be a great financier inasmuch as he had invented

it. So much merit had been claimed for something bad, that no search was made for anything good. But an accurate study of these times will prove that Pitt was really one of the greatest financiers in our history, that he repaired the great disorders of the American War, that he restored a surplus revenue, that he understood the true principles of taxation, that he even knew that the best way to increase a revenue from the consumption of the masses is to lower the rate of duty and develop their consuming power.

The subject of Parliamentary reform is the one with which, in Mr. Pitt's early days, the public most connected his name, and is also that with which we are now least apt to connect it. We have so long and so often heard him treated as the great Conservative minister, that we can hardly realise to ourselves that he was an unsparing and ardent reformer. Yet such is the indisputable fact. He proposed the abolition of the worst of the rotten boroughs fifty years before Lord Grey accomplished it. The period was a favourable one for reform. The failure of the American War had left behind it a bitter irritation and an anxious self-reproach. Why had we, with our great wealth, our great valour, our long experience, failed in what seemed a trivial enterprise? Why had we been put to shame in the face of Europe? Why had we been forced to humble ourselves in the face of Europe? Why had we been compelled to make an ignominious peace? Why had we, one of the greatest of civilised States, failed to conquer a raw and unknown colony? The popular answer was that our arms had been unsuccessful because our Government was corrupt. The practical working of our unreformed Constitution has been tersely described as the barter of patronage for power; the Parliamentary majorities of that age were kept by an incessant commerce between the proprietors of seats who sold and the Secretary of the Treasury who bought. In the present day refined arguments are often brought forward to justify or to palliate the system of government. But whatever may be the abstract worth of those arguments, their practical worth is not great. They will never convince the mass of men; they will never satisfy the unsophisticated

instinct of ordinary men; they will not remove their natural distrust of what they believe to be unpatriotic selfishness; they will not lessen their conscientious repugnance to that which they call corruption. After the disasters of the American War, this feeling was very strong and very diffused. An unpopular tree was judged of by unpopular fruits; our calamities were evident, and our corruption was conspicuous. A most distinct association of the two was formed in the popular mind. Of this Mr. Pitt took advantage. If the strong counteracting influence of the French Revolution had not changed the national opinion, he would unquestionably have amended our Parliamentary representation. Even after the French Revolution he never changed his own opinion; he considered that the time was not favourable for what we now call organic changes; and he judged wisely, for the mass of the nation was wildly and frantically Conservative; but he did not abandon his early principles: he never became a "Pittite".

The state of Ireland was a more pressing difficulty than our financial confusion, our economical errors, or our Parliamentary corruption. It had an independent Legislature, which might at any time take a dangerously different view of national interests, of the expediency of a peace, or the expediency of a war, from the English Parliament. That Legislature was a Protestant Legislature in the midst of a Catholic people; it was the Legislature of a small and hated minority in the midst of an excitable, tumultuous, oppressed people. The mass of the Irish Catholics believed that the mass of the property, which belonged in fact to the Protestants, was in strict right theirs; they believed that they were the true owners of the soil, and that the Protestants were intruders; they believed that they had a right to govern the country, and that the Protestants were usurpers; they believed that the Church which the State supported was a heretic Church; that the Church which the State did not support was the true Church—the only true Church in Christendom. In every parish the distinction between Protestant and Catholic was periodically ruled by the most critical of tests—the pecuniary test. The collection of the tithe in detail over the

country, from the Catholic population for the Protestant Church, was the source of chronic confusion and incessant bloodshed. Mr. Pitt proposed to remedy all these evils in turn, and effectually. He proposed to remedy the most immediate and pressing cause of trouble throughout the country by changing—as has since been done—the periodical extortion of the Irish tithe from the hostile farmer into an equivalent payment by a rent-charge, which could be easily collected and could give rise to no disgraceful scenes. He proposed to put the Catholic majority and the Protestant minority upon a perfect equality so far as civil rights were concerned. He was desirous that Catholics should be eligible to all offices, and be electors for all offices. He was ready likewise to destroy the prevalent religious agitation at its very root, by paying the ministers of the Church of the poor as well as the ministers of the Church of the rich. He proposed at once to remedy the national danger of having two Parliaments, and to remove the incredible corruption of the old Irish Parliament, by uniting the three kingdoms in a single representative system, of which the Parliament should sit in England. He framed, in a word, a scheme which would have cured the internal divisions of Ireland, which would have united her effectually to the Empire without impairing her real liberty.

Of these great reforms he was only permitted to carry a few into execution. His power, as we have described it, was great when his reign commenced, and very great it continued to be for very many years; but the time became unfavourable for all forward-looking statesmanship—for everything which could be called innovation. The French Revolution and the French War destroyed for many years our national taste for political improvement. But, notwithstanding these calamities, Pitt achieved some part of all his cherished schemes save one.

No opportunity would have enabled Pitt to effect these great reforms, no peculiar situation would have suggested them to him, if he had not had certain more than ordinary tendencies and abilities—the tendencies and abilities of a

great administrator. Contrary to what might at first sight be supposed, using the word "administrator" in its most enlarged sense—in the sense in which we used it at the commencement of this article—the first qualification of the highest administrator is, that he should think of something which he need not think of—of something which is not the pressing difficulty of the hour. For inferior men no rule could be so dangerous. Ambitious mediocrity is dangerous mediocrity; ordinary men find what they must do amply enough for them to do; the exacting difficulty of the hour, which will not be stayed, which must be met, absorbs their whole time and all their energies. But the ideal administrator has time, has mind—for that is the difficulty—for something more; he can do what he must, and he will do what he wishes. This is Mr. Pitt's peculiarity among the great English statesmen of the eighteenth century. As a rule, the spirit of Sir Robert Walpole ruled over all these statesmen. They respected his favourite maxim, *quieta non movere;* to deal shrewdly and adroitly with what must be dealt with; to leave alone whatever might be left alone; to accumulate every possible resource against the inevitable difficulties of the present moment, and never to think or dream or treat of what was not inevitable;—these were then, as always, the justifiable aims of commonplace men. They did *their* possible; they did all that they could with their strength and their faculties in their day and generation. The philosophy of the time, with its definite problems and its unaspiring tendencies, encouraged them; it made them unalive to the higher possibilities they were forgetting, to the higher duties they were half-consciously, half-unconsciously passing over. It was with reference to this oblivious neglect of the future, this short-sighted absorption in the present, that Dr. Arnold called this century the "misused trial-time of modern Europe". It is the distinctive characteristic of Pitt that, having a great opportunity, having power such as no Parliamentary statesman has ever had, having in his mind a fresh stock of youthful thought such as no similar statesman has ever possessed—he applied *that*

power steadily and perseveringly to embody that thought. To persons who think but slightly, this may seem only a very slight merit. The first remark of many a commonplace man would be, "If I had great power, I would carry out my own ideas". A modern Socrates, if there were such a person, would answer, "But, my good friend, what are your ideas?" When explained to an exact and scrutinising questioner, still more when confronted with the awful facts—the inevitable necessities of the real world—these "ideas" would melt away; after a little while the commonplace person, who was at first so proud of them, would cease to believe that he ever entertained them; he would say, "Men of *business* do not indulge in those speculations". The characteristic merit of Pitt is, that in the midst of harassing details, in the midst of obvious cares, in the face of most keen, most able, and most stimulated opposition, he applied his whole power to the accomplishment of great but practicable schemes.

The marvel, or at any rate the merit, is greater. Pitt was by no means an excited visionary. He had by no means one of those minds upon which great ideas fasten as a fanaticism. There was among his contemporaries a great man, who was in the highest gifts of abstract genius, in the best acquisitions of political culture, far superior to him. But in the mind of Burke great ideas were a supernatural burden, a superincumbent inspiration. He saw a great truth, and he saw nothing else. At all times with the intense irritability of genius, in later years with the extreme one-sidedness of insanity, he was content, in season and out of season, with the great visions which had been revealed to him, with the great lessons which he had to teach, and which he could but very rarely induce any one to hear. But Pitt's mind was an absolute contrast to this. He had an extreme discretion, tested at the most trying conjunctures. In 1784, when he had no power, when there was a hostile majority in the House of Commons, when he had no sure majority in the House of Lords, when the support of the King, which he undeniably had, was an undeniable difficulty;—for he did not intend to be a second Lord North; he did not intend to be a servitor of the Palace; he would not have stooped to carry out measures which

he disapproved of; he would not have been willing to enunciate measures as to which he had not been consulted;—at this very moment, with most of the constitutional powers against him, with the very greatest greatly against him, with no useful part of it truly for him—he never made a false step; he guided the most feeble administration of modern times so ably and so dexterously that in a few months it became the strongest. A mind with so delicate a tact as this is entitled to some merit for adhering to distant principles. It is those who understand the present that feel the temptation of the present; it is those who comprehend the hour that feel the truly arduous, though upon paper it may seem the petty, difficulty of thinking beyond the hour. It is no merit in those who cannot have the present to attempt to act for posterity. There is nothing else left to them; they have no other occupation open to them. But it is a great merit in those who can have what is plain, apparent, and immediate, to think of the unseen, unasking, impalpable future.

It is this singular discretion which is Mr. Pitt's peculiar merit, because he belongs to the class of statesmen who are most apt to be defective in that discretion. He was an oratorical statesman; and an oratorical statesman means, *ex vi termini*, an excitable statesman. His art consists in the power of giving successfully in a more than ordinary manner the true feelings and sentiments of ordinary men; not their superficial notions, nor their coarser sentiments, for with these any inferior man may deal, but their most intimate nature, that which in their highest moments is most truly themselves. How is the exercise of this art to be reconciled with terrestrial discretion? Is the preacher to come down from his pedestal? is he who can deal worthily with great thoughts to be asked also to deal fittingly with small details? is it possible that the same mind which can touch the hearts of all men can also be alive to the petty interests of itself? is the microscopic power to be added to the telescopic power? is the capacity for careful management to be added to the power of creating unbounded enthusiasm? Yet this is the perpetual difficulty of Parliamentary statesmen. A dry

man can do the necessary business; an excitable man can give to the popular House of Parliament the necessary excitement. Mr. Pitt was able, with surpassing ability and surpassing ease, to do both; scarcely any one else has been so.

This great Parliamentary position he owed to a combination of Parliamentary abilities, of which only one or two can be, within our necessary limits, distinctly specified, but one or two of which are very prominent.

First, his singular oratorical power. He was, Lord Macaulay tells us, "at once the one man who could explain a Budget without notes, and who could speak that most unmeaningly evasive of human compositions, a Queen's Speech, off hand". He had the eloquence of business both in its expressive and its inexpressive forms, and he had likewise the eloquence of character; that is, he had the singular power, which not half a dozen men in a generation possess, of imparting to a large audience the exact copy of the feelings, the exact impress of the determination, with which they are themselves possessed. On a matter of figures, "Pitt said so," was enough; on a question of legislative improvement, an apathetic Parliament caught some interest from his example; in the deepest moments of national despair, an anxious nation could show some remains of their characteristic courage, from his bold audacity, and unwearied, inflexible, and augmenting determination.

No man could have achieved this without a sanguine temperament, and accordingly good observers pronounced Mr. Pitt the most sanguine man they had ever known. In no stage of national despondency, in no epoch of national despair, was his capacity of hope, one of the important capacities for great men in anxious affairs, ever shaken. At the crisis of his early life, Lord Temple's resignation, which seemed the last possible addition to the coalition of difficulties under which he was labouring, is said to have deprived him of sleep; but nothing else ever did so after his power attained its maturity, and while his body retained its strength.

Over the House of Commons, too, his anxious love of detail had an influence which will not surprise those who know how sensitive that critical assembly is to every sort of genuine-

ness, and how keenly watchful it is for every kind of falsity. The labour bestowed on his reform of the Customs Acts, on his Indian measures, on his financial proposals from year to year, is matter of history; no one can look with an instructed eye at these measures without instantly being conscious of it. In addition to his other great powers, Mr. Pitt added the rare one of an intense capacity for work, in an age when that capacity was rarer than it is now, and in a Parliament where the element of dandies and idlers was far more dominant than it has since become.

Nor would this enumeration of Pitt's great Parliamentary qualities be complete—it would want, perhaps, the most striking and obvious characteristic—if we omitted to mention Pitt's well-managed shyness and his surpassing pride.

In all descriptions of Pitt's appearance in the House of Commons, a certain aloofness fills an odd space. He is a "thing apart," different somehow from other members. Fox was the exact opposite. He was a good fellow; he rolled into the House, fat, good-humoured, and popular. Pitt was spare, dignified, and reserved. When he entered the House, he walked to the place of the Premier, without looking to the right or to the left, and he sat at the same place. He was ready to discuss important business with all proper persons, upon all necessary occasions; but he was not ready to discuss business unnecessarily with any one, nor did he discuss anything but business with any save a very few intimate friends, with whom his reserve at once vanished, and his wit and humour at once expanded, and his genuine interests in all really great subjects was at once displayed. In a popular assembly this sort of reserve rightly manipulated is a power. It is analogous to the manner which the accomplished author of *Eöthen* recommends in dealing with Orientals: "it excites terror and inspires respect". A recent book of memoirs illustrates it. During Addington's administration, a certain rather obscure "Mr. G." was made a privy councillor; and the question was raised in Pitt's presence as to the mode in which he could have obtained that honour. Some one said, "I suppose he was always talking to the Premier, and bothering him".

Mr. Pitt quietly observed, "In *my* time I would much rather have made him a privy councillor *than have spoken to him*". It is easy to conceive the mental exhaustion which this well-managed reserve spared him, the number of trivial conversations which it economised, the number of imperfect ambitions which it quelled before they were uttered. An ordinary man could not of course make use of it. But Pitt at the earliest period imparted to the House of Commons the two most important convictions for a member in his position: he convinced them that he would not be the King's creature, and that he desired no pecuniary profit for himself. As he despised royal favour and despised real money, the House of Commons thought he might well despise *them*.

We have left ourselves no room to speak of Mr. Pitt's policy at the time of the French Revolution. It would require an essay of considerable length to do it substantial justice. But we may observe, that the crisis which that Revolution presented to an English statesman was one rather for a great dictator than for a great administrator. The English people were at first in general pleased with the commencement of the French Revolution. "*Anglo-manie*," it seemed, had been prevalent on the Continent; the English Constitution, it was hoped, would be transplanted; the fundamental principles of the English Revolution it was, at any rate, hoped, would be imitated. The essay of Burke by its arguments, the progress of events by an evident experience, proved that such would not be the history. What was to come was uncertain. There was no precedent on the English file; the English people did not know what they ought to think; they were ready to submit to any one who would think for them. The only point upon which their opinion was decided was, that the French Revolution was very dangerous; that it had produced awful results in France; that it was no model for imitation for sober men in a sober country. They were ready to concede anything to a statesman who allowed this, who acted on this, who embodied this in appropriate action.

Mr. Pitt saw little further than the rest of the nation; what the French Revolution was he did not understand; what

forces it would develop he did not foresee; what sort of opposition it would require he did not apprehend. He was, indeed, on one point much in advance of his contemporaries. The instinct of uncultivated persons is always towards an intemperate interference with anything of which they do not approve. A most worthy police-magistrate in our own time said, that "he intended to put down *suicide*". The English people, in the very same spirit of uncultured benevolence, wished to "put down the French Revolution". They were irritated at its excess; they were alarmed at its example; they conceived that such impiety should be punished for the past and prohibited for the future. Mr. Pitt's natural instinct, however, was certainly in an entirely opposite direction. He was by inclination and by temperament opposed to all war; he was very humane, and all war is inhumane; he was a great financier, and all war is opposed to well-regulated finance. He postponed a French war as long as he could; he consented to it with reluctance, and continued it from necessity.

Of the great powers which the sudden excitement of democratic revolution would stimulate in a nation seemingly exhausted, Mr. Pitt knew no more than those who were around him. Burke said that, as a military power, France was "blotted from the map of Europe"; and though Pitt, with characteristic discretion, did not advance any sentiment which would be so extreme, or any phrase which would adhere so fixedly to every one's memory, it is undeniable that he did not anticipate the martial power which the new France, as by magic, displayed; that he fancied she would be an effete country; that he fancied he was making war with certain scanty vestiges of the *ancien régime*, instead of contending against the renewed, excited, and intensified energies of a united people. He did not know that, for temporary purposes, a revolutionary government was the most powerful of all governments; for it does not care for the future, and has the entire legacy of the past. He forgot that it was possible, that from a brief period of tumultuous disorder, there might issue a military despotism more compact, more disciplined, and more overpowering than any which had preceded it, or any which has followed it.

But, as we have said, the conclusion of a prolonged article is no place for discussing the precise nature of Mr. Pitt's anti-revolutionary policy. Undoubtedly, he did not comprehend the Revolution in France; as Lord Macaulay has explained, with his habitual power, he over-rated the danger of a revolution in this country; he entirely over-estimated the power of the democratic assailants, and he entirely under-estimated the force of the conservative, maintaining, restraining, and, if need were, reactionary, influence. He saw his enemy;—he did not see his allies. But it is not given to many men to conquer such difficulties; it is not given to the greatest of administrators to apprehend entirely new phenomena. A highly imaginative statesman, a man of great moments and great visions, a greater Lord Chatham, might have done so, but the educated sense and equable dexterity of Mr. Pitt failed. All that he could do he did. He burnt the memory of his own name into the Continental mind. After sixty years, the French people still half believe that it was the gold of Pitt which caused many of their misfortunes; after half a century it is still certain that it was Pitt's indomitable spirit and Pitt's hopeful temper which was the soul of every Continental coalition, and the animating life of every anti-revolutionary movement. He showed most distinctly how potent is the influence of a commanding character just when he most exhibited the characteristic limitation of even the best administrative intellect.

THE PRINCE CONSORT.

(1861.)

So much has, ere this, been said upon the life and character of Prince Albert, that scarcely anything now remains except to join very simply and plainly in the regret and sympathy which have been everywhere expressed by all classes of the nation—the low as well as the high. A long narrative of a simple career would now be wholly needless, for our contemporaries have supplied many such; and any protracted eulogy would be unsuitable both to our business-like pages[1] and to the simple character of him whom we have lost.

If our loss is not—as has been extravagantly said—the greatest which the English nation could have sustained, it is among the most irreparable. Our Parliamentary constitution, in some sense, renews itself, or tends to do so. As one old statesman leaves the scene, a younger one comes forward, in the vigour of hope and power, to fill his place. When one great orator dies, another commonly succeeds him. The opportunity of the new aspirant is the departure of his predecessor; on every vacancy some new claimant — many claimants probably—strive with eager emulation to win it and to retain it. Every loss is, in a brief period, easily and fully repaired. Even, too, in the hereditary part of our constitution, most calamities are soon forgotten. One monarch dies, and another succeeds him. A new court, a new family, new hopes and new interests, spring up and supersede those which have passed away. What was, is forgotten; what is, is seen. But now we have the old Court without one of its mainstays and principal supports. The royal family of last week is still (and without change) the royal family of to-day; but the father of that

[1] The *Economist* of 21st December, where this article first appeared.

family is removed. For such a loss there is not, in this world, any adequate resource or any complete compensation. In no rank of life can any one else be to the widow and children what the deceased husband and father would have been. In the Court as in the cottage, such loss must not only be grief now, but perplexity, trouble, and perhaps mistake hereafter.

The present generation, at least the younger part of it, have lost the idea that the Court is a serious matter. Everything for twenty years has seemed to go so easily and so well, that it has seemed to go of itself. There is no such thing in this world. Everything requires anxiety, and reflection, and patience. And the function of the Court, though we easily forget it when it is well performed, keeps itself much in our remembrance when it is ill performed. Old observers say that some of the half-revolutionary discontent in the times preceding the Reform Bill was attributable to the selfish apathy and decrepit profligacy of George the Fourth. The Crown is of singular importance in a divided and contentious free State, because it is the sole object of attachment which is elevated above every contention and division. But to maintain that importance, it must create attachment. We know that the Crown now does so fully; but we do not adequately bear in mind how much rectitude of intention, how much judgment in conduct, how much power of doing right, how much power of doing nothing, are requisite to unite the loyalty and to retain the confidence of a free people.

Some cynical observers have contrasted the unlimited encomiums of the last week with the "cold observance" and very measured popularity of Prince Albert during his life. They remember the public hisses in 1855, and perhaps recall many hints and whispers of politics that have passed away. But the most graphic of our contemporaries have found nothing to record of Prince Albert so truly characteristic as this change.

His circumstances, and perhaps his character, forbade him to attempt the visible achievements and the showy displays which attract momentary popularity. Discretion is a quality seldom appreciated till it is lost; and it was discretion which Prince Albert eminently possessed.

COUNT YOUR ENEMIES AND ECONOMISE YOUR EXPENDITURE.

(1862.)

EVERY one who has visited the Star and Garter is aware that at the moment of ordering dinner there is little use in suggesting difficulties. Any one who should attempt a calculation of expense, a budget for the evening, would be marked *bore* at once. The effective orator just then is the trusted epicure that knows dishes, and sauces, and wines. The popular impulse sets strong for a good dinner; he who can satisfy that impulse is the hero of the instant; and who so attempts to stay it may hurt other people's temper, but will hardly keep his own. The time for objection is later. There is always a financial reaction at the epoch of the *bill;* then, and not till then, has the antagonist of luxury the chance of attention.

Great things and small things are just the same. When military men or naval men, or, far worse, enthusiastic amateurs of war by sea or land, insist on the necessity of such and such things No. 1, or such and such things No. 2, or such and such things No. 19 (for they will go on as long as you let them),—it is of no use objecting. They say: "England is not safe without these things. Would you endanger our country? Would you risk our homes and families? Would you not like to be secure yourself?" Such rhetoric is unanswerable for the best of all reasons, that it half-convinces oneself. The time of objection is when you see the *bill.* On a sudden the history of late years then strikes you very vividly. First, the Admiralty took away some money with which it made wooden ships; and then it "discovered its error," and acknowledged that wooden sailing ships were useless; so it asked for additional money and made wooden *steam* ships with much *éclat.* And I for one was convinced it would be all right, and that

England was now safe. But in less than a year the Admiralty discovered its error again, and pronounced all wooden ships, whether steam or sailing ships, to be useless; so it abstracted further money and constructed "iron-plated ships," the *Warrior* and that sort of thing, which cost almost fabulous sums a-piece; and now "the Admiralty is discovering its error" again, or something like it, for it wants more money, and is making what I must call naval *nondescripts*,—a sort of Merrimacs and Monitors—things more like an ugly insect than a ship, and which seem to me capable of infinite varieties, just as insects are. I know (though it is a matter of prophecy, I am as sure of it as if it had happened) that as soon as we have made one sort of these ugly and indescribable things, we shall be told it is of no use, and that we must make another more ill-favoured and indescribable still. Another point struck me two days ago. An engineer told me they had shot away powder worth a certain sum of pounds sterling in a few trials of this great new gun at Shoeburyness; and when I came to reckon, the sum was more than my income-tax. Now it is *very painful* to me that they should shoot away my income-tax. If it be necessary, very well; but certainly, when I made that money with anxiety and difficulty, I never anticipated it would be treated in such a manner.

The aggregate cost of these experiments is enormous. We spend as much as the revenues of a first-rate power on our army and navy only. We voted for the coming year—

Army (including militia) - - -	£16,000,000
Navy - - - - - - -	11,800,000
Total cost of defence - - -	£27,800,000

Now the entire revenue of Austria was only £27,300,000 in 1859; and in 1860, in the agony of deficit, it could only be raised to £30,100,000. The total revenue of the kingdom of Italy, including Naples, was, in 1861, only 490,870,036 f., or *not* £20,000,000—that is, it amounted to somewhat more, but not much more, than two-thirds of our war expenses. The increase of the outlay, too, is appalling:—

For 1851 we only voted	- - -	£15,498,839
So late as 1857	„ - - -	22,749,208
For 1861 we voted	- - - -	27,550,000

And we spent much more. All the notions of financiers are confounded by these figures. I happen to know that the late Mr. Wilson, who was no extreme economist, who had large experience in office, and who never participated in any reckless scheme of financial reform, always reckoned £16,000,000 as the ordinary sufficient peace establishment of this country. Probably this was much under the mark. But that so practical a financier as Mr. Wilson should think so (and I know that such was his opinion in 1857 and 1858), only shows how vastly our notions have altered in a short time.

These great sums ought to make an impression, but they do not make a proportionate impression: they do not influence men as they should and ought. Most persons (and I confess it is my own case) find it difficult to *keep up* their effect upon the mind: I am astounded for the moment, and I go away and forget what the figures were. Mr. Bright talks, too, of the "toiling millions" who pay all this, but I cannot *permanently* think much of them either. My interests are closer at home. The late Lord Melbourne used (I have heard) to say he had never during all his administration heard any one say he was acting for his own interest; it was a "view of human nature which had never been presented him;" everybody was always "anxious for the public welfare". I honestly confess such is not my case. I do care very much about my own money. I do not like to think that I every year supply experimental charges to a patent gun, and contribute perhaps the square inch of a cupola in some ugly and for aught I know ill-built Monitor.

I know of course what is said, and said truly enough. We are (we are told) changing, no doubt; but we are only necessarily changing with the progress of science. Great attention and wonderful inventive power has of late been invested in the arts of destruction. No sooner is one invention perfected than a second takes its place. What was a superior way of killing people in 1859, is a most inferior way, a quite *passée* and use-

less way in 1862. With all our outlay, we are barely keeping pace, it is alleged, with science: any select committee of clever engineers would prove we are not keeping pace with it. But from this statement it would appear that science is very adequate to expend money, but very inadequate to defend a country. Every year you must have, on this theory, a new set of destructive machines; every year you must give up last year's patent, for *actual trial* (as at Shoeburyness) will prove that this year's patent will break it up and smash it, and that if you depend on it you will be leaning on a broken reed. And "science" I regret to say only means scientific men, and they all differ on every difficult practical question. Whenever there is an important trial involving any complex point of engineering, twelve engineers will give evidence upon oath, and doubtless with perfect sincerity, in the affirmative,—and twelve others, with equal sincerity and upon oath also, in the negative. Now, suppose our authorities believe the wrong engineer, and our enemies' authorities believe the right "engineer". This is no impossible supposition. On the contrary, it is next to impossible that it should not frequently happen: infallibility in the choice of scientific *employés* is as rare as any other sort of administrative infallibility. And then with all our expenditure we shall be worsted. We shall have spent a large fortune, but we shall have obtained no security.

Unless we have some other guide besides a blind following of science (which, though it sound well in showy generals and reads nicely in print, only means *in life*, at the best an uncertain selection among discordant sects of scientific persons), we shall never obtain real security, and we must anticipate not a diminishing, but a still increasing expenditure. With the progress of the time science grows faster and faster, and inventions, also, multiply with accelerating rapidity. The more capital you invest in a trade, the better will its machines be; and the more augmenting the capital, the more improving the machines. There was some talk, too, of giving Captain Coles a reward for the new cupola he has invented. Now, I have not a word to say against Captain Coles: *except* his having invented this new sort of ship I never heard anything *against* him. But, as a

rule, and particular cases excepted, every new destructive invention is a great evil; it causes new expense, and renders useless old and valued implements. If you give prizes for such things to deserving persons, you are giving prizes to those who have meritoriously and cleverly done you harm,—and I am not sure if this is wise. I hope, however, that now that the Admiralty seem to have accepted Captain Coles and his creed, they will adhere to Captain Coles, or at any rate that they will adhere to some single authority on these complicated subjects. The great danger is that they should migrate from one sect to another, now believing in *Cupolarians*, now in Anti-cupolarians. In a free and complex country like this, there are very many and very various principles applicable to a shifting and miscellaneous body like the Admiralty. A compromise in business is often excellent, but a compromise in science is generally ridiculous. If we do not know the country, if we only know that there are many great men at the Admiralty, that those "many" often change, that numerous advisers and interested persons are pulling them in conflicting directions, we should at least suspect that in the long run, whatever may be the case now, our immense preparations will be only a huge assortment of miscellaneous inconveniences. We know that it will be *curious in the history of art* (for everything which is done will have considerable merit at the moment of its execution); but what its defensive effectiveness may be, it is impossible to feel sure.

Moreover, suppose it should turn out that we are preparing *in vacuo*,—that no other nation has any such accumulation of queer machines as we have. In that case how absurd would be our position! We should have diverted our capital from productive pursuits, and constructed implements with which to kill (for, though it is wrapped up in words, that is the real meaning) those who we believed were about to kill us, but who did not intend to do so at all. There is no use in a defensive engine, unless there is somewhere else in the world a related aggressive engine; and a *toy trophy* of unnecessary martial machines and weapons is the most foolish of all toy trophies.

There is one mode of speaking on this subject which is very

common, but which is, I think, most objectionable. We are to go to this expense, it is said, because public opinion requires it. *L'état c'est moi.* "Public opinion, why that's *me*." I mean seriously and plainly, that the opinion of what is called the public is simply the opinion of average ordinary persons like myself, who have not paid any particular attention to the subject, and have no special information respecting it. Such persons have no obstinate opinion that twenty-eight millions sterling and no more are necessary for the defence of the country. They know that they wish to be safe, and they are ready to pay whatever is necessary to make them safe; but they have no other notion on the subject. The particular figures are not in their memories, and the imagination of most of us will hardly *carry* such large sums. For anything they know, five millions less might be sufficient, or five millions more might be required: they could not prove twenty-three millions to be inadequate, or thirty-three millions to be enough. I could not prove it, I know, nor can any of the ordinary sensible people with whom I live. The expenditure of these large sums in obedience to public opinion comes therefore to this: "You take away my money because you say I desire that it should be taken away; but I do *not* desire it. I am willing to assent to its abstraction if it be necessary; but if it be not necessary, I would prefer to spend my own money myself."

There is apt to be a great deal of hollowness and hypocrisy in this idea of public opinion. A is very prone to believe because he thinks B believes, and C to acquiesce in what he imagines to be the accordant opinion of A and B, and thus the opinion is propagated through the alphabet to Z himself. But no one of all these persons very likely would have thought so, if he had been left to form his own opinion without any reference to the *fancied* opinion of others. In secret, each has his doubts, which he suppresses, because he fancies that others who have thought more about the matter have no such misgivings; but if a shrewd examiner were to scrutinise each man's mind, they would find much tacit, latent, accumulated doubt in each. This is the reason of those sudden fluctuations of sentiment in democratic countries where public opinion

is predominant and tyrannical. From the United States one mail recounts a positive, universal opinion that Messrs. Mason and Slidell ought *never* to be surrendered; and the very next mail tells us of an equally positive, equally universal opinion that they should be surrendered. In truth, there was little real opinion at all: there were very few people who had carefully examined the subject,—who had a solid, well-grounded judgment on that difficult matter. On Monday every one believed because he thought everybody else believed: on Tuesday it was found out that everybody else did not believe, so the unanimous national opinion *went off*. I am exceedingly afraid there is much of this intellectual suppression and tacit hypocrisy in the matter of the national defences. I find no one with clear convincing arguments in favour of this precise sum—twenty-eight millions; and until I do find a considerable number of such persons, I shall deny that there is any opinion upon the subject entitled to any deference. Every person believes because all the world believes; and yet the believing world is only an aggregate of all these unbelieving persons.

With these impressions on my mind, I took up Mr. Cobden's "Three Panics" with extreme interest, and hoped he would show that we ought not to expend this money. I read the whole pamphlet most eagerly, but I was disappointed. He proved what I can easily believe, that much nonsense has been talked upon the subject, and his review of the inconsistencies of Parliamentary debates during the last few years is searching and will be unpleasant, if not beneficial to the parties interested; but Mr. Cobden does not show me why twenty-eight millions are too much, or how twenty millions will be sufficient. He refers to Parliamentary paper 182 of Session 1859, and accordingly I purchased and read that paper attentively. It is a comparison of the French and English navies at that time, but that is three years ago. And it really is of very little consequence, except as a matter of history, how matters stood at such a distant era. Science has changed "all that," or says it has. The material fact is not the past, but the present. How many sailing wooden ships and steam wood ships we had in 1859 is not of the least importance now, when we have to compare the

relative efficiency of the two navies in iron-plated ships and in copula and other *monsters*. The Parliamentary paper was, I dare say, full and accurate at its epoch, and for the navies of the primary *strata*, but these have become an extinct species: we are now in the *tertiary* strata.

There is another objection also to Mr Cobden as an authority upon this subject. Ever since we can remember he has objected to the magnitude of our armaments. He objected as much when they cost sixteen millions as now when they cost twenty-eight millions. Common sense tells us at once that there is something wrong here. Our statesmen of all parties—(for, though Mr. Disraeli now talks of "bloated" armaments, it was Sir John Pakington who began to reconstruct the navy, and the dockyards worship him still)[1]—all our statesmen cannot have been so wild as this, and so utterly erroneous in their judgment. They cannot have made an increase in our military armament in the proportion of twenty-eight to sixteen at the moment when it ought to have been exceedingly diminished. So monstrous a blunder is incredible, and indeed there are hardly five persons probably who agree with Mr. Cobden in that opinion. He quotes Mr. Hume's clever saying, that "Our present panics were not due, as in time past, to the old women, but to our having too many clubs about London, containing so many half-pay officers who had nothing to do but to look about for themselves and their friends. These were the people who wrote to the newspapers, anxious to bring grist to the mill somehow or other." But these half-pay officers may reply, that if they are always on one side of the argument, Mr. Cobden is always on the other. When a stupid baronet objected to Mr. Fox that he was always against Mr. Pitt, whether right or wrong,—Horne Tooke replied, that it was at least an equal objection to the baronet that he was always with Mr. Pitt, whether right or wrong. Sensible men have a well-founded suspicion of those who repeat the same unvarying dogma under many varying circumstances.

[1] Three months ago, the barber at Plymouth asked me if I knew Sir John Pakington, not that he thought I did, but he wished to be civil, and *that* was his idea of *greatness*.

What, then, is the cure for these uncertainties? I say that we ought every year to have from Ministers a Military Budget, just as we have a Financial Budget. We now have explanations of the estimates; but these are not sufficient. They state clearly enough *where* the money goes; but *why* it goes where it does, we are not told regularly, officially, and consecutively. We are told that our money goes to pay such and such a number of seamen; but we are not told why that precise number is fixed on—why it should not be thousands greater or thousands less. We are told that we are building certain ships, and "converting" certain others; but why we are making so many and only so many, and pulling about (for *that* is converting) so many and only so many, we are never told.

It is quite true that incidental hints and suggestions are given in Parliament. Only last night (I am writing on the 20th of May) Lord Palmerston made some formidable statements; but I say that these reasons, which require the expenditure of so many millions, should not be incidentally extracted by the interpellations of debate, but should on some stated occasion be every year compendiously, and gravely, and fully set forth. What should we think of a Chancellor of the Exchequer who left the real reasons for the income-tax to be picked up on a chance occasion from the necessities of debate? Yet we do so with the real reasons for our army and navy, which cost more than three times the entire yield of an eightpenny income-tax. At present these reasons can only be with difficulty, if at all, picked up from Hansard.

We maintain an army and navy, I apprehend, for three main objects. First, to defend our colonies and commerce in distant countries. Secondly, for the aggressive expeditions which are more or less necessary in foreign warfare, and serve to keep our enemy at home. Thirdly and principally, for the defence of our own shores. I say principally, not because I wish to depreciate the duty of defending our distant possessions (for while we undertake to defend Canada and Victoria, Montreal and Melbourne should be as safe as London), but because London is a vital part, and therefore in great danger. Nobody expects to quell England by capturing Malta or Halifax, but

by capturing London they might expect it; and therefore I say, that the defence of our own shores is nowadays the main consideration, though in the last century we had an easier task: when there was no steam we felt safe in England, and coursed over the ocean after the fleets of the enemy.

On these three uses of a fleet and army our great departments ought to have distinct opinions. They ought to be able to deal with each separately, and with the whole collectively. They ought to be specially precise with the *third*. What is the maximum force which it is at all likely may be brought against us, and what is the disposable force with which we are prepared to meet it?

I do not say that these are easy questions. I know that they are very difficult questions, but it is because of their great difficulty that I wish them to be well discussed. Too exclusive a reference should not be made to France. France might be in alliance with some other power, say with America or Russia. At any rate the question ought to be discussed. Is such an alliance so improbable that we need not consider it, or is it so probable as to form a practical standard of maximum danger?

No state of things, it seems to me, can well be so absurd as the present. We profess to have a Parliamentary Government which lives in the face of day, whose finances are public property; and yet the cardinal criterion by which we are to judge of the expediency of twenty-eight millions of our expenditure is wholly undiscussed, and scarcely any one has a clear and distinct (to say nothing of a true) opinion about it. What is the aggressive force against which we are protecting ourselves? Let us have an estimate of that, and then we can satisfy ourselves whether our resources are sufficient or insufficient. Until we know this cardinal fact, all else is (what a friend of mine calls) *mental effluvia*—the noxious vapour which frequently surrounds a great subject, and makes people think they understand it before they do.

The changeable state of the destructive arts is of singular importance here. So many plans are being proposed (100 a month Lord Clarence Paget says for iron-plated ships only),

that the human mind, and even the inexpugnable fortitude of the Admiralty—that last citadel of common sense—is bewildered and overthrown. If we are to follow science wherever it goes, we shall follow it *hither and thither*. The truths of science progress steadily, no doubt; but the consequences and deductions of these truths in the practical arts are very *dis*continuous. To-day the state of science is favourable to shore fortifications and gunnery: the practical inference from it is, "build walls and discard ships". To-morrow some new scientific secret is discovered, of which the sure effect is to improve iron-plated ships, and to make them superior to all known guns: the practical conclusion then is, "discard walls and build ships". You can only (they say) get one shot at a ship from the best gun on shore, and, unless you are quite sure that one shot will hit and will *smash*, it is waste of money (and perhaps worse) to rely on shore guns. As a mathematical series is at one term less, and at the next term more, than the summary expression which it expands, so scientific truth, in its continual progress, at one time leans in favour of certain practical arts, and after a very brief interval is altogether opposed to those same arts, and favours their precise contraries. Unless you have some standard for your destructive constructions beside the state of science itself, you are launched on a chaos with no hope of a *kosmos*. The true test is the previous industry of competing nations. *Don't begin*. Unless some known foreign nation has already made, or is actually making, some new things of the same sort, or something which requires this new sort to resist it, don't commence. Do not unnecessarily invest a million sterling in the patent of Captain Monstrous, when it may be upset to-morrow by the better patent of Captain Fitzmonstrous. If there were such a detailed budget of armaments yearly as I suggest, the Admiralty could not do this. They would have to say plainly and expressly, and under the check of criticism, what foreign work each work of ours was meant to oppose. Proof that the aggressive engine exists, or is being produced, would then be required before we erected the defensive engine that is to ward it off or to destroy it. The want of our discussions on this subject is explicit consecutiveness. We should

have from our public departments a precise enumeration of the uses of each new killing thing *as it comes out*, and the only recognised use should be the name of the killing foreign thing which it resembles. Unless you take this plain and natural precaution, you have no security against the natural disposition (as I have before explained it) of the Admiralty to listen to everybody; you have no security that our navy may not soon resemble, as I have a clinging suspicion it soon will, the single shop of a large agricultural village, which contains something of everything, and contains nothing that is good.

It will be said, "If our Ministers *know* all this, why compel them to *say* it in Parliament at the risk of offending foreign countries?" Far be it from me to write upon what I cannot possibly know. The Cabinet is a secret council in the most peculiar and singular sense. I believe I may say that in all the books of memoirs which have been published for the last 150 years, there is not a single graphic description of a Cabinet Council, notwithstanding the thousands that have been held in that time. Among ordinary men, no one knows what it resembles. But, like many other causes, though its interior essence is occult and impalpable, the external *indicia* of its action are plain and evident. One rule, I believe, all experienced observers coincide in.

A Cabinet seldom *really* attends to anything which is not of close Parliamentary interest. They are a Committee of both Houses for managing both Houses, and nowadays mainly for managing the House of Commons. Lord Macaulay has explained, in a passage which every one well knows, how ill Parliament worked when there was not such a standing Committee to attend to and regulate it. A Cabinet is chosen out of persons who tolerably agree on pressing Parliamentary questions, and who agree on little else. Is it likely that they will collectively attend to much else?

Consider, too, the occupation of Cabinet Ministers. To get through the necessary work of a great department—to attend the House of Commons with official watchfulness and regularity—to achieve the mere correspondence of Minister (omitting all the exhausting *social* claims on such a man)—are

each of them terrifying tasks. Putting them together, we may rather wonder (for myself I constantly wonder) how men's nerves and brains contrive to get through them, rather than ask anything additional of them. But, taking these overtasked Parliamentary statesmen as they are and must be, is it not certain that all *un*parliamentary questions will be (in the school phrase) *extras;* that they won't enter into the real, mental, practical, pressing life; that, though individuals may attend to them, a whole Cabinet, or any considerable portion of a Cabinet, will not?

Unless, therefore, our naval and military expenditure can be really and truly subjected to Parliament—unless there is a *bonâ fide* prospect of proximate adverse divisions—we must not expect our Parliamentary statesmen to attend much to that expenditure. Human nature would hardly need government if it would produce at once sixteen statesmen who were willing, under existing circumstances, to attend to it. The case is this; you place men in the most laborious, distracting, absorbing routine which has ever been known in the world; you give them so much to do that they have hardly time or mind to it, and then you ask them to sit up *at odd hours* to attend to something else. Human patriotism does not go that length. You may ask this, but you will not get it.

The evident cure is to make, not the aggregate sum of money, but the living details of policy and construction, matters of Parliamentary discussion and deliberation. Let it be clearly understood the "balance of armaments" between this country and foreign countries will be scrutinised as nicely, and discussed as freely, as the balance between our income and expenditure, and we should soon have a *real* Cabinet opinion upon it: what is more, we should soon have a real public opinion upon it. Now we have no data for saying what our defensive outlay should be. *Then* we should have authoritative facts to weigh and responsible reasonings to estimate.

It will be said that such detailed discussion in Parliament will be offensive to foreign nations. I do not think it need be; but if it were so, I should boldly say it is better to risk a little occasional offence abroad than to spend untold sums without

an intelligible, at least without an ***understood***, reason at home. But, on the contrary, I think the effect abroad would be favourable. Official speakers in such a careful annual statement as I suggest would be sure to speak carefully and guardedly; it is in the haphazard impromptus of fortuitous debate that rankling casualties are uttered. And the all-important conclusion would be made clear, that our armaments are, as a mathematician would say, only ***functions*** of foreign armaments; that if foreign nations increase theirs, we shall as a principle increase ours, so that they will gain nothing; and if foreign nations diminish theirs, they will incur no risk as far as we are concerned, for we shall at once diminish ours too. The only way to impart a confidence in this principle of our policy, is to make it part of our annual Parliamentary system, which is public and notorious to all the world. The really pacific ***nature*** of England is not comprehended anywhere abroad, because the considerations which regulate the amount of our armaments are only half divulged, and are supposed on the Continent to be in fact offensive, while they really and truly are defensive.

I hope no one will fancy that a change of Government would at all lessen our expenditure. Mr. Disraeli uses forcible though rather nasty language about "bloated armaments". But relying on him is like admiring the colour of a chameleon: he is sure to be altogether different the next time your attention is called to him. He tells us, indeed, that a policy of subservience to France would be cheaper than a manly friendship with her. But if he were in office he could not, if he would, save money by subservience to France: the English people would not permit it; they prefer being taxed to being mean. They are not yet reduced to desire a foreign policy because it is cheap, instead of defraying the cost of a policy which they think right. Besides, I doubt if an over-civil policy would answer with France; it certainly did not answer with Russia. Lord Aberdeen was over-anxious to maintain peace with Russia, and ***thereby*** he entangled us in a costly war. If the bolder policy which Lord Palmerston at the time recommended had at once been adopted, many excellent judges believe we should

have escaped that war. Moreover, the Conservative party are even more connected with the aristocratic services than the Whig party. To employ Sir John Pakington and General Peel as the best persons to reduce the army and navy, is like trying to diminish objects with a lens *because* it is a good magnifier. The real remedy is a change from a bad system to a good system,—not a change from superior men to inferior ones.

On the whole, I am afraid this proposal will not suit any party; and yet it is not to be at once discarded on that account. Mr. Cobden won't like me saying that he has not *proved* our armaments to be excessive; Mr. Disraeli won't like my saying that he does not deserve to come into office; the thick-and-thin supporters of Government won't like my saying that the information upon which they have been eager to vote these vast sums is very insufficient. But it *has* happened that on certain subjects all extreme opinions are wrong; it *has* happened that a more moderate opinion coincides with the truth.

POSTSCRIPT.

I see the Report of the National Defence Commission is just about to be presented, and I am sure I do not wish to hold a brief in the great cause—Floating *versus* Stationary. There are enough counsel in that already. But there is one point to which public opinion ought to be directed, and has not been directed. Such places as Plymouth are accumulations on the sea-coast of everything which ought not to be on the sea-coast. Thirty years ago it was necessary to have the victualling-office, the rope-walk, and the store of timber at the water's edge, for there was no steam to bring whatever was necessary from the interior. And this position was then not dangerous. There was no steam to bring our enemies' vessels on a sudden upon us. Now the choice of the water's edge is both needless and dangerous. Anything can be brought by railway, and any place may, with little warning, be attacked by steam-ships. Surely, then, we should see if we cannot simplify and lessen Plymouth before we defend its huge and well-stocked area. A dock on the water's edge for repairing ships and for building them is

intelligible; but why the *arsenal*—the storehouse of everything naval—should be at the most exposed possible point, is unintelligible. If Belgium were to erect an arsenal on her French frontier, we should say she was mad; yet the sea-board is *our* French frontier.

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU.[1]

(1862.)

NOTHING is so transitory as second-class fame. The name of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu is hardly now known to the great mass of ordinary English readers. A generation has arisen which has had time to forget her. Yet only a few years since, an allusion to the "Lady Mary" would have been easily understood by every well-informed person; young ladies were enjoined to form their style upon hers; and no one could have anticipated that her letters would seem in 1862 as different from what a lady of rank would then write or publish as if they had been written in the times of paganism. The very change, however, of popular taste and popular morality gives these letters now a kind of interest. The farther and the more rapidly we have drifted from where we once lay, the more do we wish to learn what kind of port it was. We venture, therefore, to recommend the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu as an instructive and profitable study, not indeed to the youngest of young ladies, but to those maturer persons of either sex "who have taken all knowledge to be their province," and who have commenced their readings in "universality" by an assiduous perusal of Parisian fiction.

It is, we admit, true that these letters are not at the present day very agreeable reading. What our grandfathers and grandmothers thought of them it is not so easy to say. But it now seems clear that Lady Mary was that most miserable of human

[1] *The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.* Edited by her Great-grandson, Lord Wharncliffe. Third edition, with Additions and Corrections derived from the original Manuscripts, illustrative Notes, and a New Memoir. By W. Moy Thomas. In two volumes. London: Henry Bohn,

beings, an ambitious and wasted woman; that she brought a very cultivated intellect into a very cultivated society; that she gave to that society what it was most anxious to receive, and received from it all which it had to bestow; and yet that this all was to her as nothing. The high intellectual world of England has never been so compact, so visible in a certain sense, so enjoyable, as it was in her time. She had a mind to understand it, beauty to adorn it, and wit to amuse it; but she chose to pass a great part of her life in exile, and returned at last to die at home among a new generation, whose name she hardly knew, and to whom she herself was but a spectacle and a wonder.

Lady Mary Pierrepont—for that was by birth her name—belonged to a family which had a traditional reputation for ability and cultivation. The *Memoirs of Lucy Hutchinson*—(almost the only legacy that remains to us from the first generation of refined Puritans, the only book, at any rate, which effectually brings home to us how different they were in taste and in temper from their more vulgar and feeble successors)—contains a curious panegyric on *wise William* Pierrepont, to whom the Parliamentary party resorted as an oracle of judgment, and whom Cromwell himself, if tradition may be trusted, at times condescended to consult and court. He did not, however, transmit much of his discretion to his grandson, Lady Mary's father. This nobleman, for he inherited from an elder branch of the family both the marquisate of Dorchester and the dukedom of Kingston, was a mere man "about town," as the homely phrase then went, who passed a long life of fashionable idleness interspersed with political intrigue, and who signalised his old age by marrying a young beauty of fewer years than his youngest daughter, who, as he very likely knew, cared nothing for him and much for another person. He had the "grand air," however, and he expected his children, when he visited them, to kneel down immediately and ask his blessing, which, if his character was what is said, must have been *very* valuable. The only attention he ever (that we know of) bestowed on Lady Mary was a sort of theatrical outrage, pleasant enough to her at the time, but scarcely in accordance

with the educational theories in which we now believe. He was a member of the Kit-Cat, a great Whig club, the Brooks's of Queen Anne's time, which, like Brooks's, appears not to have been purely political, but to have found time for occasional relaxation and for somewhat unbusiness-like discussions. They held annually a formal meeting to arrange the female toasts for that year; and we are told that "a whim seized" her father "to nominate" Lady Mary, "then not eight years old, a candidate; alleging that she was far prettier than any lady on their list. The other members demurred, because the rules of the club forbade them to elect a beauty whom they had never seen. 'Then you shall see her,' cried he; and in the gaiety of the moment sent orders home to have her finely dressed and brought to him at the tavern, where she was received with acclamations, her claim unanimously allowed, her health drunk by every one present, and her name engraved in due form upon a drinking-glass. The company consisting of some of the most eminent men in England, she went from the lap of one poet, or patriot, or statesman, to the arms of another, was feasted with sweetmeats, overwhelmed with caresses, and what perhaps already pleased her better than either, heard her wit and beauty loudly extolled on every side. Pleasure, she said, was too poor a word to express her sensations; they amounted to ecstasy: never again, throughout her whole future life, did she pass so happy a day. Nor, indeed, could she; for the love of admiration, which this scene was calculated to excite or increase, could never again be so fully gratified; there is always some alloying ingredient in the cup, some drawback upon the triumphs, of grown people. Her father carried on the frolic, and we may conclude, confirmed the taste, by having her picture painted for the club-room, that she might be enrolled a regular toast." Perhaps some young ladies of more than eight years old would not much object to have lived in those times. Fathers may be wiser now than they were then, but they rarely make themselves so thoroughly agreeable to their children.

This stimulating education would leave a weak and vain girl still more vain and weak; but it had not that effect on

Lady Mary. Vain she probably was, and her father's boastfulness perhaps made her vainer; but her vanity took an intellectual turn. She read vaguely and widely; she managed to acquire some knowledge—how much is not clear—of Greek and Latin, and certainly learned with sufficient thoroughness French and Italian. She used to say that she had the worst education in the world, and that it was only by the "help of an uncommon memory and indefatigable labour" that she had acquired her remarkable attainments. Her father certainly seems to have been capable of any degree of inattention and neglect; but we should not perhaps credit too entirely all the legends which an old lady recounted to her grandchildren of the intellectual difficulties of her youth.

She seems to have been encouraged by her grandmother, one of the celebrated Evelyn family, whose memory is thus enigmatically but still expressively enshrined in the diary of the author of *Sylva:* "Under this date," we are informed, "of the 2nd of July, 1649, he records a day spent at Godstone, where Sir John" (this lady's father) "was on a visit with his daughter"; and he adds: "Mem. The prodigious memory of Sir John of Wilts's daughter, since married to Mr. W. Pierrepont". The lady who was thus formidable in her youth deigned in her old age to write frequently, as we should now say,—to open a "regular commerce" of letters, as was said in that age —with Lady Mary when quite a girl, which she always believed to have been beneficial to her, and probably believed rightly; for she was intelligent enough to comprehend what was said to her, and the old lady had watched many changes in many things.

Her greatest intellectual guide, at least so in after life she used to relate, was Mr. Wortley, whom she afterwards married. "When I was young," she said, "I was a great admirer of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and that was one of the chief reasons that set me upon the thoughts of stealing the Latin language. Mr. Wortley was the only person to whom I communicated my design, and he encouraged me in it. I used to study five or six hours a day for two years in my father's library; and so got that language, whilst everybody else thought I was reading

nothing but novels and romances." She perused, however, some fiction also; for she possessed, till her death, the whole library of Mrs. Lennox's *Female Quixote*, a ponderous series of novels in folio, in one of which she had written, in her fairest youthful hand, the names and characteristic qualities of "the beautiful Diana, the volatile Clemene, the melancholy Doris, Celadon the faithful, Adamas the wise, and so on, forming two columns".

Of Mr. Wortley's character it is not difficult, from the materials before us, to decipher the features; he was a slow man, with a taste for quick companions. Swift's diary to Stella mentions an evening spent over a bottle of old wine with Mr. Wortley and Mr. Addison. Mr. Wortley was a rigid Whig, and Swift's transition to Toryism soon broke short that friendship. But with Addison he maintained an intimacy which lasted during their joint lives, and survived the marriages of both. With Steele likewise he was upon the closest terms, is said to have written some papers in the *Tatler* and *Spectator;* and the second volume of the former is certainly dedicated to him in affectionate and respectful terms.

Notwithstanding, however, these conspicuous testimonials to high ability, Mr. Wortley was an orderly and dull person. Every letter received by him from his wife during five and twenty years of absence, was found, at his death, carefully endorsed with the date of its arrival, and with a *synopsis* of its contents. "He represented," we are told, "at various times, Huntingdon, Westminster, and Peterborough in Parliament, and appears to have been a member of that class who win respectful attention by sober and business-like qualities; and his name is constantly found in the drier and more formal part of the politics of the time." He answered to the description given more recently of a similar person: "Is not," it was asked, "Sir John ——— a very methodical person?" "Certainly he is," was the reply, "he files his invitations to dinner." The Wortley papers, according to the description of those who have inspected them, seem to contain the accumulations of similar documents during many years. He hoarded money, however, to more purpose, for he died one of the richest

commoners in England; and a considerable part of the now marvellous wealth of the Bute family seems at first to have been derived from him.

Whatever good qualities Addison and Steele discovered in Mr. Wortley, they were certainly not those of a good writer. We have from his pen and from that of Lady Mary a description of the state of English politics during the three first years of George I., and any one who wishes to understand how much readability depends upon good writing would do well to compare the two. Lady Mary's is a clear and bright description of all the superficial circumstances of the time; Mr. Wortley's is equally superficial, often unintelligible and always lumbering, and scarcely succeeds in telling us more than that the writer was wholly unsuccessful in all which he tried to do. As to Mr. Wortley's contributions to the periodicals of his time, we may suspect that the jottings preserved at London are all which he ever wrote of them, and that the style and arrangement were supplied by more skilful writers. Even a county member might furnish headings for the *Saturday Review*. He might say: "*Trent* British vessel—Americans always intrusive—Support Government—Kill all that is necessary".

What Lady Mary discovered in Mr. Wortley it is easier to say and shorter, for he was very handsome. If his portrait can be trusted, there was a placid and business-like repose about him, which might easily be attractive to a rather excitable and wild young lady, especially when combined with imposing features and a quiet sweet expression. He attended *to her* also. When she was a girl of fourteen, he met her at a party, and evinced his admiration. And a little while later, it is not difficult to fancy that a literary young lady might be much pleased with a good-looking gentleman not uncomfortably older than herself, yet having a place in the world, and well known to the literary men of the age. He was acquainted with the classics too, or was supposed to be so; and whether it was a consequence of or a preliminary to their affections, Lady Mary wished to know the classics also.

Bishop Burnet was so kind as to superintend the singular

studies—for such they were clearly thought—of this aristocratic young lady; and the translation of the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus, which he revised, is printed in this edition of her works. But even so grave an undertaking could not wholly withdraw her from more congenial pursuits. She commenced a correspondence with Miss Wortley, Mr. Wortley's unmarried sister, which still remains, though Miss Wortley's letters are hardly to be called hers, for her brother composed, and she merely copied them. The correspondence is scarcely in the sort of English or in the tone which young ladies, we understand, now use.

"It is as impossible," says Miss Wortley, "for my dearest Lady Mary to utter thought that can seem dull as to put on a look that is not beautiful. Want of wit is a fault that those who envy you most would not be able to find in your kind compliments. To me they seem perfect, since repeated assurances of your kindness forbid me to question their sincerity. You have often found that the most angry, nay, the most neglectful air you can assume, has made as deep a wound as the kindest; and these lines of yours, that you tax with dulness (perhaps because they were writ when you was not in a right humour, or when your thoughts were elsewhere employed) are so far from deserving the imputation, that the very turn of your expression, had I forgot the rest of your charms, would be sufficient to make me lament the only fault you have—your inconstancy."

To which the reply is:—

"I am infinitely obliged to you, my dear Mrs. Wortley, for the wit, beauty, and other fine qualities you so generously bestow upon me. Next to receiving them from heaven, you are the person from whom I would choose to receive gifts and graces: I am very well satisfied to owe them to your own delicacy of imagination, which represents to you the idea of a fine lady, and you have good nature enough to fancy I am she. All this is mighty well, but you do not stop there; imagination is boundless. After giving me imaginary wit and beauty, you give me imaginary passions, and you tell me I'm in love: if I am it is a perfect sin of ignorance, for I don't so much as know the man's name: I have been studying these three hours, and cannot guess who you mean. I passed the days of Nottingham races [at] Thoresby without seeing, or even wishing to see, one of the sex. Now, if I am in love, I have very hard fortune to conceal it so industriously from my own knowledge, and yet discover it so much to other people. 'Tis against all form to have such a passion as that, without giving one sigh for the matter. Pray tell me the name of him I love, that I may (according to the laudable custom of lovers) sigh to the woods and groves hereabouts, and teach it to the echo."

After some time Miss Wortley unfortunately died, and there was an obvious difficulty in continuing the correspondence without the aid of an appropriate sisterly screen. Mr. Wortley seems to have been tranquil and condescending; perhaps he thought placid tactics would be most effective, for Lady Mary was not so calm. He sent her some *Tatlers*, and received, by way of thanks, the following tolerably encouraging letter:—

"*To Mr. Wortley Montagu.*

"I am surprised at one of the *Tatlers* you send me; is it possible to have any sort of esteem for a person one believes capable of having such trifling inclinations? Mr. Bickerstaff has very wrong notions of our sex. I can say there are some of us that despise charms of show, and all the pageantry of greatness, perhaps with more ease than any of the philosophers. In contemning the world, they seem to take pains to contemn it; we despise it, without taking the pains to read lessons of morality to make us do it. At least I know I have always looked upon it with contempt, without being at the expense of one serious reflection to oblige me to it. I carry the matter yet farther; was I to choose of two thousand pounds a year or twenty thousand, the first would be my choice. There is something of an unavoidable *embarras* in making what is called a great figure in the world; [it] takes off from the happiness of life; I hate the noise and hurry inseparable from great estates and titles, and look upon both as blessings that ought only to be given to fools, for 'tis only to them that they are blessings. The pretty fellows you speak of, I own, entertain me sometimes; but is it impossible to be diverted with what one despises? I can laugh at a puppet show; at the same time I know there is nothing in it worth my attention or regard. General notions are generally wrong. Ignorance and folly are thought the best foundations for virtue, as if not knowing what a good wife is was necessary to make one so. I confess that can never be my way of reasoning; as I always forgive an *injury* when I think it not done out of malice, I can never think myself *obliged* by what is done without design. Give me leave to say it (I know it sounds vain), I know how to make a man of sense happy; but then that man must resolve to contribute something towards it himself. I have so much esteem for you, I should be very sorry to hear you was unhappy; but for the world I would not be the instrument of making you so; which (of the humour you are) is hardly to be avoided if I am your wife. You distrust me—I can neither be easy, nor loved, where I am distrusted. Nor do I believe your passion for me is what you pretend it; at least I am sure was I in love I could not talk as you do. Few women would have spoke so plainly as I have done; but to dissemble is among the things I never do. I take more pains to approve my conduct to myself than to the world; and would not have to accuse myself of a minute's deceit. I wish I loved you enough to devote

myself to be for ever miserable, for the pleasure of a day or two's happiness. I cannot resolve upon it. You must think otherwise of me, or not at all.

"I don't enjoin you to burn this letter. I know you will. 'Tis the first I ever writ to one of your sex, and shall be the last. You must never expect another. I resolve against all correspondence of the kind; my resolutions are seldom made, and never broken."

Mr. Wortley, however, still grumbled. He seems to have expected a young lady to do something even more decisive than ask him to marry her. He continued to hesitate and pause. The lady in the comedy says, "what right has a man to intend unless he states his intentions?" and Lady Mary's biographers are entirely of that opinion. They think her exceedingly ill-used, and Mr. Wortley exceedingly to blame. And so it may have been; certainly a love-correspondence is rarely found where activity and intrepidity on the lady's side so much contrast with quiescence and timidity on the gentleman's. If, however, we could summon him before us, probably Mr. Wortley would have something to answer on his own behalf. It is tolerably plain that he thought Lady Mary too excitable. "Certainly," he doubtless reasoned, "she is a handsome young lady, and very witty; but beauty and wit are dangerous as well as attractive. Vivacity is delightful; but my esteemed friend Mr. Addison has observed that excessive quickness of parts is not unfrequently the cause of extreme rapidity in action. Lady Mary makes love to me before marriage, and I like it; but may she not make love also to some one else after marriage? and then I shall not like it." Accordingly he writes to her timorously as to her love of pleasure, her love of romantic reading, her occasional toleration of younger gentlemen and quicker admirers. At last, however, he proposed; and, as far as the lady was concerned, there was no objection.

We might have expected, from a superficial view of the facts, that there would have been no difficulty either on the side of her father. Mr. Wortley died one of the richest commoners in England; was of the first standing in society, of good family, and he had apparently, therefore, money to settle and station to offer to his bride. And he did offer both. He was ready

to settle an ample sum on Lady Mary, both as his wife and as his widow, and was anxious that, if they married, they should live in a manner suitable to her rank and his prospects. But nevertheless there was a difficulty. The *Tatler* had recently favoured its readers with dissertations upon social ethics not altogether dissimilar to those with which the *Saturday Review* frequently instructs its readers. One of those dissertations[1] contained an elaborate exposure of the folly of settling your estate upon your unborn children. The arguments were of a sort very easily imaginable. "Why," it was said, "should you give away that which you have to a person whom you do not know; whom you may never see; whom you may not like when you do see; who may be undutiful, unpleasant, or idiotic? Why, too, should each generation surrender its due control over the next? When the family estate is settled, men of the world know that the father's control is gone, for disinterested filial affection is an unfrequent though doubtless possible virtue; but so long as *property* is in suspense, all expectants will be attentive to those who have it in their power to give or not to give it." These arguments had converted Mr. Wortley, who is said even to have contributed notes for the article, and they seem to have converted Lady Mary also. She was to have her money, and the most plain-spoken young ladies do not commonly care to argue much about the future provision for their possible children; the subject is always delicate and a little frightful, and on the whole, must be left to themselves. But Lord Dorchester, her father, felt it his duty to be firm. It is an old saying, that "you never know where a man's conscience may turn up," and the advent of ethical feeling was in this case even unusually beyond calculation. Lord Dorchester had never been an anxious father, and was not now going to be a liberal father. He had never cared much about Lady Mary, except in so far as he could himself gain *éclat* by exhibiting her youthful beauty, and he was not now at her marriage about to do at all more than was necessary and decent in his station. It was not therefore apparently probable that he would be irritatingly obstinate respecting the income of his daughter's children. He

[1] No. 223, 12th September, 1710.

was so, however. He deemed it a duty to see that "*his* grandchild never should be a beggar," and, for what reason does not so clearly appear, wished that his eldest male grandchild should be immensely richer than all his other grandchildren. The old feudal aristocrat, often in modern Europe so curiously disguised in the indifferent exterior of a careless man of the world, was, as became him, dictatorial and unalterable upon the duty of founding a family. Though he did not care much for his daughter, he cared much for the position of his daughter's eldest son. He had probably stumbled on the fundamental truth that "girls were girls, and boys were boys," and was disinclined to disregard the rule of primogeniture by which he had obtained his marquisate, and from which he expected a dukedom.

Mr. Wortley, however, was through life a man, if eminent in nothing else, eminent at least in obstinacy. He would not give up the doctrine of the *Tatler* even to obtain Lady Mary. The match was accordingly abandoned, and Lord Dorchester looked out for and found another gentleman whom he proposed to make his son-in-law; for he believed, according to the old morality, "that it was the duty of the parents to find a husband for a daughter, and that when he was found, it was the daughter's duty to marry him". It was as wrong in her to attempt to choose as in him to neglect to seek. Lady Mary was, however, by no means disposed to accept this passive theory of female obligation. She *had* sought and chosen; and to her choice she intended to adhere. The conduct of Mr. Wortley would have offended some ladies, but it rather augmented her admiration. She had exactly that sort of irritable intellect which sets an undue value on new theories of society and morality, and is pleased when others do so too. She thought Mr. Wortley was quite right not to "defraud himself for a possible infant," and admired his constancy and firmness. She determined to risk a step, as she herself said, unjustifiable to her own relatives, but which she nevertheless believed that she could justify to herself. She decided on eloping with Mr. Wortley.

Before, however, taking this audacious leap, she looked a little. Though she did not object to the sacrifice of the custo-

mary inheritance of her contingent son, she by no means approved of sacrificing the settlement which Mr. Wortley had undertaken at a prior period of the negotiation to make upon herself. And, according to common sense, she was undoubtedly judicious. She was going from her father, and foregoing the money which he had promised her; and therefore it was not reasonable that, by going *to* her lover, she should forfeit also the money which *he* had promised her. And there is nothing offensive in her mode of expression. "'Tis something odd for a woman that brings nothing to expect anything; but after the way of my education, I dare not pretend to live but in some degree suitable to it. I had rather die than return to a dependency upon relations I have disobliged. Save me from that fear, if you love me. If you cannot, or think I ought not to expect it, be sincere and tell me so. 'Tis better I should not be yours at all, than, for a short happiness, involve myself in ages of misery. I hope there will never be occasion for this precaution; but, however, 'tis necessary to make it." But true and rational as all this seems, perhaps it is still truer and still more rational to say, that if a woman has not sufficient confidence in her lover to elope with him without a previous promise of a good settlement, she had better not elope with him at all. After all, if he declines to make the stipulated settlement, the lady will have either to return to her friends or to marry without it, and she would have the full choice between these satisfactory alternatives, even if she asked no previous promise from her lover. At any rate, the intrusion of coarse money among the refined materials of romance is, in this case, even more curious and remarkable than usual.

After some unsuccessful attempts, Lady Mary and Mr. Wortley did elope and did marry, and, after a certain interval, of course, Lord Dorchester received them, nothwithstanding their contempt of his authority, into some sort of favour and countenance. They had probably saved him money by their irregularity, and economical frailties are rarely judged severely by men of fashion who are benefited by them. Lady Mary, however, was long a little mistrusted by her own relations, and never seems to have acquired much family influence; but her

marriage was not her only peculiarity, or the only one which impartial relations might dislike.

The pair appear to have been for a little while tolerably happy. Lady Mary was excitable, and wanted letters when absent, and attention when present: Mr. Wortley was heavy and slow; could not write letters when away, and seemed torpid in her society when at home. Still, these are common troubles. Common, too, is the matrimonial correspondence upon baby's deficiency in health, and on Mrs. Behn's opinion that "the cold bath is the best medicine for weak children". It seems an odd end to a deferential perusal of Latin authors in girlhood, and to a spirited elopement with the preceptor in after years; but the transition is only part of the usual irony of human life.

The world, both social and political, into which Lady Mary was introduced by her marriage was singularly calculated to awaken the faculties, to stimulate the intellect, to sharpen the wit, and to harden the heart of an intelligent, witty, and hard-headed woman. The world of London—even the higher world—is now too large to be easily seen, or to be pithily described. The elements are so many, their position is so confused, the display of their mutual counteraction is so involved, that many years must pass away before even a very clever woman can thoroughly comprehend it all. She will cease to be young and handsome long ere she does comprehend it. And when she at last understands it, it does not seem a fit subject for concise and summary wit. Its evident complexity refuses to be condensed into pithy sayings and brilliant *bons-mots*. It has fallen into the hands of philosophers, with less brains perhaps than the satirists of our fathers, but with more anxiety to tell the whole truth, more toleration for the many-sidedness of the world, with less of sharp conciseness, but, perhaps, with more of useful completeness. As are the books, so are the readers. People do not wish to read satire now-a-days. The epigrams even of Pope would fall dull and dead upon this serious and investigating time. The folly of the last age affected levity; the folly of this, as we all know, encases itself in ponderous volumes which defy refutation, in elaborate arguments which

prove nothing, in theories which confuse the uninstructed, and which irritate the well-informed. The folly of a hundred years since was at least the folly of Vivien, but ours is the folly of Merlin:—

> " *You* read the book, my pretty Vivien,
> And none can read the text, not even I,
> And none can read the comments but myself—
> Oh, the results are simple ! " [1]

Perhaps people did not know then as much as they know now: indisputably they knew nothing like so much in a superficial way *about* so many things; but they knew far more correctly where their knowledge began and where it stopped; what they thought and why they thought it: they had readier illustrations and more summary phrases; they could say at once what it *came to*, and to what action it should lead.

The London of the eighteenth century was an aristocratic world, which lived to itself, which displayed the virtues and developed the vices of an aristocracy which was under little fear of external control or check; which had emancipated itself from the control of the Crown; which had not fallen under the control of the *bourgeoisie;* which saw its own life, and saw that, according to its own maxims, it was good. Public opinion now rules, and it is an opinion which constrains the conduct, and narrows the experience, and dwarfs the violence, and minimises the frankness of the highest classes, while it diminishes their vices, supports their conscience, and precludes their grossness. There was nothing like this in the last century, especially in the early part of it. The aristocracy came to town from their remote estates—where they were uncontrolled by any opinion or by any equal society, and where the eccentricities and personalities of each character were fostered and exaggerated—to a London which was like a large county town, in which everybody of rank knew everybody of rank, where the eccentricities of each rural potentate came into picturesque collision with the eccentricities of other rural potentates, where the most minute allusions to the peculiarities and the career of the principal persons were instantly understood, where squibs

[1] Tennyson: " Merlin and Vivien ".

were on every table, and where satire was in the air. No finer field of social observation could be found for an intelligent and witty woman. Lady Mary understood it at once.

Nor was the political life of the last century so unfavourable to the influence and so opposed to the characteristic comprehension of women as our present life. We are now ruled by political discussion and by a popular assembly, by leading articles, and by the House of Commons. But women can scarcely ever compose leaders, and no woman sits in our representative chamber. The whole tide of abstract discussion, which fills our mouths and deafens our ears, the whole complex accumulation of facts and figures to which we refer everything, and which we apply to everything, is quite unfemale. A lady has an insight into what she sees; but how will this help her with the case of the *Trent*, with the proper structure of a representative chamber, with Indian finance or Parliamentary reform? Women are clever, but cleverness of itself is nothing at present. A sharp Irish writer described himself "as bothered entirely by the want of preliminary information"; women are in the same difficulty now. Their nature may hereafter change, as some sanguine advocates suggest. But the visible species certainly have not the intellectual providence to acquire the vast stores of dry information which alone can enable them to judge adequately of our present controversies. We are ruled by a machinery of oratory and discussion, in which women have no share, and which they hardly comprehend: we are engaged on subjects which need an arduous learning, to which they have no pretensions.

In the last century much of this was very different. The court still counted for much in English politics. The House of Commons was the strongest power in the State machine, but it was not so immeasurably the strongest power as now. It was absolutely supreme within its sphere, but that sphere was limited. It could absolutely control the money, and thereby the policy, of the State. Whether there should be peace or war, excise or no excise, it could and did despotically determine. It was supreme in its choice of *measures*. But, on the other hand, it had only a secondary influence in the

choice of *persons*. Who the Prime Minister was to be, was a question not only theoretically determinable, but in fact determined by the Sovereign. The House of Commons could despotically impose two conditions: first, that the Prime Minister should be a man of sufficient natural ability, and sufficient Parliamentary experience, to conduct the business of his day; secondly, that he should adopt the policy which the nation wished. But, subject to a conformity with these prerequisites, the selection of the king was nearly uncontrolled. Sir Robert Walpole was the greatest master of Parliamentary tactics and political business in his generation; he was a statesman of wide views and consummate dexterity; but these intellectual gifts, even joined to immense parliamentary experience, were not alone sufficient to make him and to keep him Prime Minister of England. He also maintained, during two reigns, a complete system of court-strategy. During the reign of George II. he kept a *queen-watcher*. Lord Hervey, one of the cleverest men in England, the keenest observer, perhaps, in England, was induced, by very dexterous management, to remain at court during many years—to observe the queen, to hint to the queen, to remove wrong impressions from the queen, to confirm the Walpolese predilections of the queen, to report every incident to Sir Robert. The records of politics tell us few stranger tales than that it should have been necessary for the Sir Robert Peel of the age to hire a subordinate as safe as Eldon, and as witty as Canning, for the sole purpose of managing a clever German woman, to whom the selection of a Prime Minister was practically entrusted. Nor was this the only court-campaign which Sir Robert had to conduct, or in which he was successful. Lady Mary, who hated him much, has satirically described the foundation upon which his court favour rested during the reign of George I:—

"The new court with all their train was arrived before I left the country. The Duke of Marlborough was returned in a sort of triumph, with the apparent merit of having suffered for his fidelity to the succession, and was reinstated in his office of general, etc. In short, all people who had suffered any hardship or disgrace during the late ministry would have it believed that it was occasioned by their attachment to the House of Hanover. Even Mr. Walpole, who had been sent to the Tower for a

piece of bribery proved upon him, was called a confessor to the cause. But he had another piece of good luck that yet more contributed to his advancement; he had a very handsome sister, whose folly had lost her reputation in London; but the yet greater folly of Lord Townshend, who happened to be a neighbour in Norfolk to Mr. Walpole, had occasioned his being drawn in to marry her some months before the queen died.

"Lord Townshend had that sort of understanding which commonly makes men honest in the first part of their lives; they follow the instructions of their tutor, and, till somebody thinks it worth their while to show them a new path, go regularly on in the road where they are set. Lord Townshend had then been many years an excellent husband to a sober wife, a kind master to all his servants and dependents, a serviceable relation wherever it was in his power, and followed the instinct of nature in being fond of his children. Such a sort of behaviour without any glaring absurdity, either in prodigality or avarice, always gains a man the reputation of reasonable and honest; and this was his character when the Earl of Godolphin sent him envoy to the States, not doubting but he would be faithful to his orders, without giving himself the trouble of criticising on them, which is what all ministers wish in an envoy. Robotun, a French refugee (secretary to Bernstoff, one of the Elector of Hanover's ministers), happened then to be at the Hague, and was civilly received at Lord Townshend's, who treated him at his table with the English hospitality, and he was charmed with a reception which his birth and education did not entitle him to. Lord Townshend was recalled when the queen changed her ministry; his wife died, and he retired into the country, where (as I have said before), Walpole had art enough to make him marry his sister Dolly. At that time, I believe, he did not propose much more advantage by the match than to get rid of a girl that lay heavy on his hands.

"When King George ascended the throne, he was surrounded by all his German ministers and playfellows, male and female. Baron Goritz was the most considerable among them both for birth and fortune. He had managed the king's treasury thirty years with the utmost fidelity and economy; and had the true German honesty, being a plain, sincere, and unambitious man. Bernstoff, the secretary, was of a different turn. He was avaricious, artful, and designing; and had got his share in the king's councils by bribing his women. Robotun was employed in these matters, and had the sanguine ambition of a Frenchman. He resolved there should be an English ministry of his choosing; and, knowing none of them personally but Townshend, he had not failed to recommend him to his master, and his master to the king, as the only proper person for the important post of Secretary of State; and he entered upon that office with universal applause, having at that time a very popular character, which he might possibly have retained for ever if he had not been entirely governed by his wife and her brother R. Walpole, whom he immediately advanced

to be paymaster, esteemed a post of exceeding profit, and very necessary for his indebted estate."

And it is indisputable that Lord Townshend, who thought he was a very great statesman, and who began as the patron of Sir Robert Walpole, nevertheless was only his court-agent —the manager on his behalf of the king and of the king's mistresses.

We need not point out at length, for the passage we have cited of itself indicates, how well suited this sort of politics is to the comprehension and to the pen of a keen-sighted and witty woman.

Nor was the court the principal improver of the London society of the age. The House of Commons was then a part of society. This separate, isolated, aristocratic world, of which we have spoken, had an almost undisputed command of both Houses in the Legislature. The letter of the constitution did not give it them, and no law appointed that it should be so. But the aristocratic class were by far the most educated, by far the most respected, by far the most *eligible* part of the nation. Even in the boroughs, where there was universal suffrage, or something near it, they were the favourites. Accordingly, they gave the tone to the House of Commons; they required the small community of members who did not belong to their order to conform as far as they could to their usages, and to guide themselves by their code of morality and of taste. In the main the House of Commons obeyed these injunctions, and it was repaid by being incorporated within the aristocratic world: it became not only the council of the nation, but the debating-club of fashion. That which was "received" modified the recipient. The remains of the aristocratic society, wherever we find them, are penetrated not only with an aristocratic but with a political spirit. They breathe a sort of atmosphere of politics. In the London of the present day, the vast miscellaneous *bourgeois* London, we all know that this is not so. "In the country," said a splenetic observer, "people talk politics; at London dinners you talk nothing; between two pillars of crinoline you eat and are resigned." A hundred and fifty years ago, as far as our rather

ample materials inform us, people in London talked politics just as they now talk politics in Worcestershire; and being on the spot, and cooped up with politicians in a small social world, their talk was commonly better. They knew the people of whom they spoke, even if they did not know the subjects with which they were concerned.

No element is better fitted to counteract the characteristic evil of an aristocratic society. The defect of such societies in all times has been frivolity. All talk has tended to become gossip; it has ceased to deal with important subjects, and has devoted itself entirely to unimportant incidents. Whether the Duc de —— has more or less prevailed with the Marquise de —— is a sort of common form into which any details may be fitted, and any names inserted. The frivolities of gallantry—never very important save to some woman who has long been dead—fill the records of all aristocracies who lived under a despotism, who had no political authority, no daily political cares. The aristocracy of England in the last century was, at any rate, exempt from *this* reproach. There is in the records of it not only an intellectuality, which would prove little—for every clever describer, by the subtleties of his language and the arrangement of his composition, gives a sort of intellectuality even to matters which have no pretension to it themselves—but likewise a pervading medium of political discussion. The very language in which they are written is the language of political business. Horace Walpole was certainly by nature no politician and no orator; yet no discerning critic can read a page of his voluminous remains without feeling that the writer has through life lived with politicians and talked with politicians. A keen observant mind, not naturally political, but capable of comprehending and viewing any subject which was brought before it, has chanced to have this particular subject—politics—presented to it for a lifetime; and all its delineations, all its efforts, all its thoughts, reflect it, and are coloured by it. In all the records of the eighteenth century the tonic of business is seen to combat the relaxing effect of habitual luxury.

This element, too, is favourable to a clever woman. The

more you can put before such a person the greater she will be; the less her world, the less she is. If you place the most keen-sighted lady in the midst of the pure futilities and unmitigated flirtations of an aristocracy, she will sink to the level of those elements, and will scarcely seem to wish for anything more, or to be competent for anything higher. But if she is placed in an intellectual atmosphere, in which political or other important subjects are currently passing, you will probably find that she can talk better upon them than you can, without your being able to explain whence she derived either her information or her talent.

The subjects, too, which were discussed in the political society of the last age were not so inscrutable to women as our present subjects; and even when there were great difficulties they were more on a level with men in the discussion of them than they now are. It was no disgrace to be destitute of preliminary information at a time in which there were no accumulated stores from which such information could be derived. A lightening element of female influence is therefore to be found through much of the politics of the eighteenth century.

Lady Mary entered easily into all this world, both social and political. She had beauty for the fashionable, satire for the witty, knowledge for the learned, and intelligence for the politician. She was not too refined to shrink from what we now consider the coarseness of that time. Many of her verses themselves are scarcely adapted for our decorous pages. Perhaps the following give no unfair idea of her ordinary state of mind:—

"TOWN ECLOGUES.

"ROXANA; OR, THE DRAWING-ROOM.

"Roxana, from the court retiring late,
Sigh'd her soft sorrows at St. James's Gate.
Such heavy thoughts lay brooding in her breast,
Not her own chairmen with more weight oppress'd;
They groan the cruel load they're doom'd to bear;
She in these gentle sounds express'd her care.

"'Was it for this that I these roses wear?
For this new-set the jewels for my hair?
Ah! Princess! with what zeal have I pursued!
Almost forgot the duty of a prude.
Thinking I never could attend too soon,
I've miss'd my prayers, to get me dress'd by noon.
For thee, ah! what for thee did I resign!
My pleasures, passions, all that e'er was mine.
I sacrific'd both modesty and ease,
Left operas and went to filthy plays;
Double-entendres shock my tender ear;
Yet even this for thee I choose to bear.
In glowing youth, when nature bids be gay,
And every joy of life before me lay,
By honour prompted, and by pride restrain'd,
The pleasures of the young my soul disdain'd:
Sermons I sought, and with a mien severe
Censur'd my neighbours, and said daily prayer.
"'Alas! how chang'd—with the same sermon-mien
That once I pray'd, the "What d'ye call't"[1] I've seen.
Ah! cruel Princess, for thy sake I've lost
That reputation which so dear had cost:
I, who avoided every public place,
When bloom and beauty bade me show my face,
Now near thee constant every night abide
With never-failing duty by thy side;
Myself and daughters standing on a row,
To all the foreigners a goodly show!
Oft had your drawing-room been sadly thin,
And merchants' wives close by the chair been seen,
Had not I amply filled the empty space,
And saved your highness from the dire disgrace.
"'Yet Coquetilla's artifice prevails,
When all my merit and my duty fails;
That Coquetilla, whose deluding airs
Corrupt our virgins, still your youth ensnares;
So sunk her character, so lost her fame,
Scarce visited before your highness came:
Yet for the bed-chamber 'tis her you choose,
When zeal and fame and virtue you refuse.
Ah! worthy choice! not one of all your train
Whom censure blasts not, and dishonours stain!
Let the nice hind now suckle dirty pigs,
And the proud pea-hen hatch the cuckoo's eggs!

[1] A mock-tragedy by Gay.

Let Iris leave her paint and own her age,
And grave Suffolka wed a giddy page!
A greater miracle is daily view'd,
A virtuous Princess with a court so lewd.
"'I know thee, Court! with all thy treach'rous wiles,
Thy false caresses and undoing smiles!
Ah! Princess, learn'd in all the courtly arts,
To cheat our hopes, and yet to gain our hearts!
"'Large lovely bribes are the great statesman's aim;
And the neglected patriot follows fame.
The Prince is ogled; some the King pursue;
But your Roxana only follows you.
Despis'd Roxana, cease, and try to find
Some other, since the Princess proves unkind:
Perhaps it is not hard to find at court,
If not a greater, a more firm support.'"

There was every kind of rumour as to Lady Mary's own conduct, and we have no means of saying whether any of these rumours were true. There is no evidence against her which is worthy of the name. So far as can be proved, she was simply a gay, witty, bold-spoken, handsome woman, who made many enemies by unscrupulous speech, and many friends by unscrupulous flirtation. We may believe, but we cannot prove, that she found her husband tedious, and was dissatisfied that his slow, methodical, *borné* mind made so little progress in the political world, and understood so little of what really passed there. Unquestionably she must have much preferred talking to Lord Hervey to talking with Mr. Montagu. But we must not credit the idle scandals of a hundred years since; because they may have been true, or because they appear not inconsistent with the characters of those to whom they relate. There were legends against every attractive and fashionable woman in that age, and most of the legends were doubtless exaggerations and inventions. We cannot know the truth of such matters now, and it would hardly be worth searching into if we could; but the important fact is certain, Lady Mary lived in a world in which the worst rumours were greedily told, and often believed, about her and others; and the moral refinement of a woman must always be impaired by such a contact.

Lady Mary was so unfortunate as to incur the partial dislike of one of the great recorders of that age, and the bitter hostility of the other. She was no favourite with Horace Walpole, and the bitter enemy of Pope. The first is easily explicable. Horace Walpole never loved his father, but recompensed himself by hating his father's enemies. No one connected with the opposition to Sir Robert is spared by his son, if there be a fair opportunity for unfavourable insinuation. Mr. Wortley Montagu was the very man for a grave mistake. He made the very worst that could be made in that age. He joined the party of constitutional exiles on the Opposition bench, who had no real objection to the policy of Sir Robert Walpole; who, when they had a chance, adopted that policy themselves; who were discontented because they had no power, and he had all the power. Probably too, being a man eminently respectable, Mr. Montagu was frightened at Sir Robert's unscrupulous talk and not very scrupulous actions. At any rate, he opposed Sir Robert; and thence many a little observation of Horace Walpole's against Lady Mary.

Why Pope and Lady Mary quarrelled is a question on which much discussion has been expended, and on which a judicious German professor might even now compose an interesting and exhaustive monograph. A curt English critic will be more apt to ask, "Why they should *not* have quarrelled?" We know that Pope quarrelled with almost every one; we know that Lady Mary quarrelled or half quarrelled with most of her acquaintances. Why, then, should they not have quarrelled with one another?

It is certain that they were very intimate at one time; for Pope wrote to her some of the most pompous letters of compliment in the language. And the more intimate they were to begin with, the more sure they were to be enemies in the end. Human nature will not endure that sort of proximity. An irritable, vain poet, who always fancies that people are trying to hurt him, whom no argument could convince that every one is not perpetually thinking about him, cannot long be friendly with a witty woman of unscrupulous tongue, who spares no one, who could sacrifice a good friend

for a bad *bon-mot*, who thinks of the person whom she is addressing, not of those about whom she is speaking. The natural relation of the two is that of victim and torturer, and no other will long continue. There appear also to have been some money matters (of all things in the world) between the two. Lady Mary was entrusted by Pope with some money to use in speculation during the highly fashionable panic which derives its name from the South-Sea Bubble,—and as of course it was lost, Pope was very angry. Another story goes, that Pope made serious love to Lady Mary, and that she laughed at him; upon which a very personal, and not always very correct, controversy has arisen as to the probability or improbability of Pope's exciting a lady's feelings. Lord Byron took part in it with his usual acuteness and incisiveness, and did not leave the discussion more decent than he found it. Pope doubtless was deformed, and had not the large red health that uncivilised women admire; yet a clever lady might have taken a fancy to him, for the little creature knew what he was saying. There is, however, no evidence that Lady Mary did so. We only know that there was a sudden coolness or quarrel between them, and that it was the beginning of a long and bitter hatred.

In their own times Pope's sensitive disposition probably gave Lady Mary a great advantage. Her tongue perhaps gave him more pain than his pen gave her. But in later times she has fared the worst. What between Pope's sarcasms and Horace Walpole's anecdotes, Lady Mary's reputation has suffered very considerably. As we have said, her offences are *non proven;* there is no evidence to convict her; but she is likely to be condemned upon the general doctrine that a person who is accused of much is probably guilty of something.

During many years Lady Mary continued to live a distinguished fashionable and social life, with a single remarkable break. This interval was her journey to Constantinople. The powers that then were, thought fit to send Mr. Wortley as ambassador to Constantinople, and his wife accompanied him. During that visit she kept a journal, and wrote sundry real letters, out of which, after her return, she composed a series of

unreal letters as to all she saw and did in Turkey, and on the journey there and back, which were published, and which are still amusing, if not always select, reading. The Sultan was not then the "dying man"; he was the "Grand Turk". He was not simply a potentate to be counted with, but a power to be feared. The appearance of a Turkish army on the Danube had in that age much the same effect as the appearance of a Russian army now. It was an object of terror and dread. A mission at Constantinople was not then a *bureau* for interference in Turkey, but a serious office for transacting business with a great European power. A European ambassador at Constantinople now presses on the Government there impracticable reforms; he then asked for useful aid. Lady Mary was evidently impressed by the power of the country in which she sojourned; and we observe in her letters evident traces of the notion that the Turk was the dread of Christendom,—which is singular now, when the Turk is its *protégé*.

Lady Mary had another advantage too. Many sorts of books make steady progress; a scientific treatise published now is sure to be fuller and better than one on the same subject written long ago. But with books of travel in a stationary country the presumption is the contrary. In that case the old book is probably the better book. The first traveller writes out a plain, straightforward description of the most striking objects with which he meets; he believes that his readers know nothing of the country of which he is writing, for till he visited it he probably knew nothing himself; and, if he is sensible, he describes simply and clearly all which most impresses him. He has no motive for not dwelling upon the principal things, and most likely will do so, as they are probably the most conspicuous. The second traveller is not so fortunate. He is always in terror of the traveller who went before. He fears the criticism,—"This is all very well, *but* we knew the whole of it before. No. 1 said that at page 103." In consequence he is timid. He picks and skips. He fancies that you are acquainted with all which is great and important, and he dwells, for your good and to your pain, upon that which is small and unimportant.

For ordinary readers no result can be more fatal. They perhaps never read—they certainly do not remember—anything upon the subject. The curious *minutiæ*, so elaborately set forth, are quite useless, for they have not the general framework in which to store them. Not knowing much of the first traveller's work, that of the second is a supplement to a treatise with which they are unacquainted. In consequence they do not read it. Lady Mary made good use of her position in the front of the herd of tourists. She told us what she saw in Turkey—all the best of what she saw, and all the most remarkable things—and told it very well.

Nor was this work the only fruit of her Turkish travels; she brought home the notion of inoculation. Like most improvers, she was roughly spoken to. Medical men were angry because the practice was not in their books, and conservative men were cross at the agony of a new idea. Religious people considered it wicked to have a disease which Providence did not think fit to send you; and simple people "did not like to make themselves ill of their own accord". She triumphed, however, over all obstacles; inoculation, being really found to lengthen life and save complexions, before long became general.

One of the first patients upon whom Lady Mary tried the novelty was her own son, and many considerate people thought it "worthy of observation" that he turned out a scamp. When he ran away from school, the mark of inoculation, then rare, was used to describe him, and after he was recovered, he never did anything which was good. His case seems to have been the common one in which Nature (as we speak) requites herself for the strongheadedness of several generations by the weakness of one. His father's and his mother's family had been rather able for some generations; the latter remarkably so. But this boy had always a sort of practical imbecility. He was not stupid, but he never did anything right. He exemplified another curious trait of Nature's practice. Mr. Montagu was obstinate, though sensible; Lady Mary was flighty, though clever. Nature combined the defects. Young Edward Montagu was both obstinate and

flighty. The only pleasure he can ever have given his parents was the pleasure of *feeling* their own wisdom. He showed that they were right before marriage in not settling the paternal property upon him, for he ran through every shilling he possessed. He was not sensible enough to keep his property, and just not fool enough for the law to take it from him.

After her return from Constantinople, Lady Mary continued to lead the same half-gay and half-literary life as before; but at last she did not like it. Various ingenious inquirers into antiquated *minutiæ* have endeavoured, without success, to discover reasons of detail which might explain her dissatisfaction. They have suggested that some irregular love-affair was unprosperous, and hinted that she and her husband were not on good terms. The love-affair, however, when looked for, cannot be found; and though she and her husband would appear to have been but distantly related, they never had any great quarrel which we know of. Neither seems to have been fitted to give the other much pleasure, and each had the fault of which the other was most impatient. Before marriage Lady Mary had charmed Mr. Montagu, but she had also frightened him; after marriage she frightened, but did not charm him. He was formal and composed; she was flighty and *outrée*. "What *will* she do next?" was doubtless the poor man's daily feeling; and "Will he ever do anything?" was probably also hers. Torpid business, which is always going on, but which never seems to come to anything, is simply aggravating to a clever woman. Even the least impatient lady can hardly endure a perpetual process for which there is little visible and nothing theatrical to show; and Lady Mary was by no means the least impatient. But there was no abrupt quarrel between the two; and a husband and wife who have lived together more than twenty years can generally manage to continue to live together during a second twenty years. These reasons of detail are scarcely the reasons for Lady Mary's wishing to break away from the life to which she had so long been used. Yet there was clearly some reason, for Lady Mary went abroad, and stayed there during many years.

We believe that the cause was not special and peculiar to the case, but general, and due to the invariable principles of human nature, at all times and everywhere. If historical experience proves anything, it proves that the earth is not adapted for a life of mere intellectual pleasure. The life of a brute on earth, though bad, is possible. It is not even difficult to many persons to destroy the higher part of their nature by a continual excess in sensual pleasure. It is even more easy and possible to dull all the soul and most of the mind by a vapid accumulation of torpid comfort. Many of the middle classes spend their whole lives in a constant series of petty pleasures, and an undeviating pursuit of small material objects. The gross pursuit of pleasure, and the tiresome pursuit of petty comfort, are quite suitable to such "a being as man in such a world as the present one". What is not possible is, to combine the pursuit of pleasure and the enjoyment of comfort with the characteristic pleasures of a strong mind. If you wish for luxury, you must not nourish the inquisitive instinct. The great problems of human life are in the air; they are without us in the life we see, within us in the life we feel. A quick intellect feels them in a moment. It says, "Why am I here? What is pleasure, that I desire it? What is comfort, that I seek it? What are carpets and tables? What is the lust of the eye? What is the pride of life, that they should satisfy *me?* I was not made for such things. I hate them, because I have liked them; I loathe them, because it seems that there is nothing else for me." An impatient woman's intellect comes to this point in a moment; it says, "Society is good, but I have seen society. What is the use of talking, or hearing *bon-mots?* I have done both till I am tired of doing either. I have laughed till I have no wish to laugh again, and made others laugh till I have hated them for being such fools. As for instruction, I have seen the men of genius of my time; and they tell me nothing,—nothing of what I want to know. They are choked with intellectual frivolities. They cannot say 'whence I came, and whither I go'. What do they know of themselves? It is not from literary people that we can learn anything; more likely, they will copy,

or try to copy, the manners of lords, and make ugly love, in bad imitation of those who despise them." Lady Mary felt this, as we believe. She had seen all the world of England, and it did not *satisfy*. She turned abroad, not in pursuit of definite good, nor from fear of particular evil, but from a vague wish for some great change—from a wish to escape from a life which harassed the soul, but did not calm it; which awakened the intellect without answering its questions.

She lived abroad for more than twenty years, at Avignon and Venice and elsewhere; and, during that absence, she wrote the letters which compose the greater part of her works. And there is no denying that they are good letters. The art of note-writing may become classical—it is for the present age to provide models of that sort of composition—but letters have perished. Nobody but a bore now takes pains enough to make them pleasant; and the only result of a bore's pains is to make them unpleasant. The correspondence of the present day is a continual labour without any visible achievement. The dying penny-a-liner said with emphasis: "that which I have written has perished". We might all say so of the mass of petty letters we write. They are a heap of small atoms, each with some interest individually, but with no interest as a whole; all the items concern us, but they all add up to nothing. In the last century, cultivated people who sat down to write a letter took pains to have something to say, and took pains to say it. The postage was perhaps ninepence; and it would be impudent to make a correspondent pay ninepence for nothing. Still more impudent was it, *after* having made him pay ninepence, to give him the additional pain of making out what was half expressed. People, too, wrote to one another then, not unfrequently, who had long been separated, and who required much explanation and many details to make the life of each intelligible to the other. The correspondence of the nineteenth century is like a series of telegrams with amplified headings. There is not more than one idea; and that idea comes soon, and is soon over. The best correspondence of the last age is rather like a good light article,—in which the points are studiously made,—in which the effort to

make them is studiously concealed,—in which a series of selected circumstances is set forth,—in which you feel, but are not told, that the principle of the writer's selection was to make his composition pleasant.

In letter-writing of this kind Lady Mary was very skilful. She has the highest merit of letter-writing—she is concise without being affected. Fluency, which a great orator pronounced to be the curse of orators, is at least equally the curse of writers. There are many people, many ladies especially, who can write letters at any length, in any number, and at any time. We may be quite sure that the letters so written are not good letters. Composition of any sort implies consideration; you must see where you are going before you can go straight, or can pick your steps as you go. On the other hand, too much consideration is unfavourable to the ease of letter-writing, and perhaps of all writing. A letter too much studied wants flow; it is a museum of hoarded sentences. Each sentence sounds effective; but the whole composition wants vitality. It was written with the memory instead of the mind; and every reader feels the effect, though only the critical reader can detect the cause. Lady Mary understood all this. She said what she had to say in words that were always graphic and always sufficiently good, but she avoided curious felicity. Her expressions seemed choice, but not chosen.

At the end of her life Lady Mary pointed a subordinate but not a useless moral. The masters of mundane ethics observe that "you should stay in the world, or stay out of the world". Lady Mary did neither. She went out and tried to return. Horace Walpole thus describes the result: "Lady Mary Wortley is arrived; I have seen her; I think her avarice, her art, and her vivacity are all increased. Her dress, like her language, is a *galimatias* of several countries; the groundwork rags, and the embroidery nastiness. She needs no cap, no handkerchief, no gown, no petticoat, and no shoes. An old black laced hood represents the first; the fur of a horseman's coat, which replaces the third, serves for the second; a dimity petticoat is deputy and officiates for the

fourth; and slippers act the part of the last. When I was at Florence, and she was expected there, we were drawing *sortes Virgilianas* for her; we literally drew

'Insanam vatem aspicies'.[1]

It would have been a stranger prophecy now even than it was then." There is a description of what the favourite of society becomes after leaving it for years, and after indulging eccentricities for years! There is a commentary on the blunder of exposing yourself in your old age to young people, to whom you have always been a tradition and a name! Horace Walpole doubtless painted up a few trivialities a little. But one of the traits is true. Lady Mary lived before the age in which people waste half their lives in washing the whole of their persons.

Lady Mary did not live long after her return to England. Horace Walpole's letter is written on the 2nd February, 1762, and she died on the 21st August in the same year. Her husband had died just before her return, and perhaps, after so many years, she would not have returned unless he had done so. *Requiescat in pace;* for she quarrelled all her life.

[1] *Aneid*, iii., 443.

THE IGNORANCE OF MAN.[1]

(1862.)

A BOLD man once said that religion and morality were inconsistent. He argued thus: The essence of religion—part of the essence, at any rate—is recompense; a belief in another life is only another name for the anticipation of a time when wickedness will be punished, and when goodness will be rewarded. If you admit a Providence, you acknowledge the existence of an adjusting agency, of a power which is recompensing by its very definition, and of its very nature, which allots happiness to virtue and pain to vice. On the other hand, the essence of morality is disinterestedness; a man who does good for the sake of a future gain to himself is, in a moral point of view, altogether inferior to one who does good for the good's sake, who hopes for nothing again, who is not thinking of himself, who is not calculating his own futurity. Between a man who does good to the world because he takes an intelligent view of his real interest, and another who does harm to the world because he is blind to that interest, there is only an intellectual difference,—the one is mentally long-sighted, the other mentally short-sighted. By the admission of all mankind, a disinterested action is better than a selfish action; a disinterested man is higher than a selfish man. Yet how is it possible that a religious man can be disinterested? Heaven overarches him, hell yawns before him. How can he help having his eyes attracted by the one and terrified by the other? He boasts, indeed, that religion is useful to mankind by producing good actions; he extols

[1] *Science in Theology.* Sermons preached before the University of Oxford. By the Rev. Adam S. Farrar. Longmans.

the attractive influence of future reward, and the deterring efficacy of apprehended penalty. But his boast is absurd and premature; by holding forth these anticipated bribes, by menacing these pains, he extracts from virtue *its virtue;* he makes it selfishness like the rest; he constructs an edifying and hoping saint, but he spoils the disinterested and uncalculating man.

These thoughts are not often boldly expressed. Fundamental difficulties rarely are. They constantly confuse the mind, and they are always floating like a vague mist in the intellectual air; they distort and blur the outlines of everything else, but they have no distinct outline of their own. An obscure difficulty is a prevailing evil; the first requisite for removing it is to make it clear; if you assign a limit, you notify the frontier at which it may be attacked.

The objection is, in most people's apprehensions, and in its common incomplete expressions, confined exclusively to the doctrine of a future life, but it is at least equally applicable to the belief in a God who rules and governs. We can of course conceive of supernatural beings who do not interfere with us, who do not care for us, who do not help us, who have no connection with our moral life, who do good to no one, who do evil to no one. Such were the gods of Lucretius, the most fascinating of pure inventions; but such gods are not the gods of religion. The ancient Epicurean, in times when obscure difficulties were discussed in plainer words than is now either possible or advisable, expressly defended them on that ground. He did not want his gods to interfere with him; he thought it would impair the ideal languor of their life, as well as the inapprehensive security of his own life. They lived "self-scanned, self-centred, self-secure,"[1] and he was, in so far as was possible, to do so also. He did not wish the voluptuaries of heaven to become the busybodies of earth. He liked to have a pleasant dream of the upper world, but he did not wish it to descend and rule him. But as soon as we abandon the natural fiction of the voluptuous imagination; as soon as we accept the idea of a God who is a providence in

[1] Matthew Arnold.

the universe, and not an idol in heaven; as soon as we allow that He loves good and hates evil; as soon as we are sure that He is our Father, and chastises us as children; as soon as we acknowledge a God such as the human heart and conscience crave for, the God of Christianity,—we at once reach the primitive difficulty. Here is a Being who *we know* will reward the good and punish the evil; how can we do good without reference to that supernatural recompense, or evil without shrinking from that apprehended penalty?

Nor is it for this purpose in the least material, though for many other purposes it is very material, whether we consider God as acting by irrevocable laws fixed once for all, or upon a system which (though foreseen and immutable to Him, to whom all the future is as present as all the past) is according to our view of it,—to our translation of it, so to speak, into our limited capacities,—capable of flexibility at His touch, and of modification at His pleasure. If we know that we are rewarded and punished, it matters little, as respects our hope and our apprehension, whether that punishment be inflicted by a machine or by a person; in one case we shall shun the contact with the lacerating wheel, and in the other we shall dread a blow from the punitive hand. But in either case the pain will be the determining motive, the deterring thought. We shall act as we do act, not from a disinterested intention to do our duty, whatever be the consequences, but from a sincere wish to get off patent and proximate suffering. The difficulty of reconciling a true morality with a true religion is not confined to that part of religion which relates to the anticipated life of man hereafter, but extends to the very idea of a superintending providence and preadjusting Creator, in whatever mode we conceive that superintendence to be exercised, and that adjustment to have been made.

The answer most commonly given to this difficulty is unquestionably fallacious. It is said that the desire of eternal life for ourselves is a motive far greater and far better than the desire of anything else, either for ourselves or for others. It is not conceived as a form of selfishness at all—at least, not when regarded in this connection, and employed to solve this

problem. At other times, indeed, divines are ready enough to twist the argument the other way. They will expand at length the notion that there is a "common-sense" in the Gospel; that it appeals to "business-like motives"; that there is nothing "high-flown" about it; that it aims to persuade sensible men of this world, on sufficient reasons of sound prudence, to sacrifice the present world in order to gain the invisible one; that, whatever sentimentalists may assert, it is reward which incites to achievement, and fear that restrains from misdoing. Sermons are written in consecrated paragraphs, each of which is sufficient to itself, and the connection between which is not intended to be precisely adjusted; each has an edifying tendency, and the writer and the hearer wish for no more. Otherwise it would not be possible, as it often is, to hear religion commended in the same discourse at one time as self-sacrificing, and at another as prudential; to have a eulogium on disinterestedness in the exordium, and an appeal to selfishness at the conclusion. A mode of composition which less disguised the true ideas of the composer, would show that many divines really believe a desire for a long pleasure in heaven, to be not only more long-sighted and sensible, but intrinsically higher, nobler, and better than a desire for a short happiness on earth. Yet, when stated in short sentences and plain English, the idea is palpably absurd. The "wish to come into a good thing" is of the same ethical order, whether the good thing be celestial or be terrestrial, be distinctly future, or be close at hand.

A second mode of solving the difficulty, though more ingenious, and in every way far better, is erroneous also. It is said "men generally act from mixed motives, and they do so in this case. They are partly disinterested, and partly not disinterested. They are desirous of doing good because it is good, and they are desirous also of having the reward of goodness hereafter. They wish at the very same time to benefit their neighbour in this world, and also to benefit themselves in the world to come." The reply is ingenious, but it overlooks the point of the difficulty; it mistakes the nature of mixed motives. The constitution of man is such that if you

strengthen one of two co-operating motives you weaken, other things being equal, the force of the other; the lesser impulse tends always to be absorbed in the stronger, and it may pass entirely out of thought if the stronger is strengthened, if the greater become more prominent. We see this in common life; it is undoubtedly possible for a statesman to act at the same moment both from the love of office and from the love of his country; from a wish to prolong his power and a wish to benefit his nation. But strengthen one of these motives, and, *cæteris paribus*, you weaken the other. Make the statesman love office more, you thereby make him love his country less; he will be readier to sacrifice what he will call a "vague theory and an impracticable purpose" for the sake of the power which he loves; he will cease to care to do what he ought, from a wish to retain the capacity of doing something. Or, suppose a further case: there have been many times and countries where the loss of office was equivalent to the loss of liberty, perhaps to that of life. In one age of English history, one great historian says, "There was but a single step from the throne to the scaffold". In another age, another great historian says, "It was as dangerous to be leader of opposition as to be a highwayman".[1] The possessors of power in those times, upon principle, destroyed or endeavoured to destroy their predecessors. Such a prospect would induce a statesman to love office for its own sake. It would absorb the whole of his attention; he could hardly be asked to think of his country. Extraordinary men would do so, but ordinary men would be overwhelmed by the "violent motive" of personal fear; they would only be thinking of themselves even when they were doing what in truth and fact was beneficial to their country.

The case is similar to the "violent motive," as Paley calls it,[2] of religion, when presented in the same manner in which Paley presents it. If you could extend before men the awful vision of everlasting perdition, if they could see it as they see the things on earth—as they see Fleet Street and St. Paul's;

[1] Macaulay: "Essay on Sir James Mackintosh's History".

[2] *Moral Philosophy*, book ii., chaps. ii., iii.

if you could show men likewise the inciting vision of an everlasting heaven, if they could see that too with undeniable certainty and invincible distinctness,—who could say that they would have a thought for any other motive? The personal incentive to good action, and the personal dissuasion from bad action, would absorb all other considerations, whether deterrent or persuasive. We could no more break a divine law than we could commit a murder in the open street. The fact that men act from mixed motives is no explanation of the great difficulty with which we started; for the precise peculiarity of that difficulty is to raise one of those mixed motives to an intensity which seems likely to absorb, extinguish, and annihilate the other.

The true explanation is precisely the reverse. The moral part of religion—the belief in a moral state hereafter, dependent for its nature on our goodness or our wickedness, the belief in a moral Providence, who apportions good to good, and evil to evil—does not annihilate the sense of the inherent nature of good and evil because it is itself the result of that sense. Our only ground for accepting an ethical and retributive religion is the inward consciousness that virtue being virtue must prosper, that vice being vice must fail. From these axioms we infer, not logically, but practically, that there is a continuous eternity, in which what we expect will be seen, that there is a Providence who will apportion what is good, and punish what is evil. Of the mode in which we do so we will speak presently more at length; but granting that this description of our religion is true, it undeniably solves our difficulty. Our religion cannot by possibility swallow up morality because it is dependent for its origin—for its continuance—on that morality.

Suppose a person, say in a prison, to have no knowledge by the senses that there was such a thing as human law; suppose that he never saw either the judicial or the executive authorities, and that no one ever told him of their existence; suppose that by a consciousness of the inherent nature of good and evil, the fact that such an institution *must* exist should dawn upon his mind,—of course it would not, but imagine

that it should,—it is absurd to suppose that he would feel his power of doing what is right *because* it is right diminished. When he goes out into the world, when he hears his judge, when he sees the policeman, when he surveys the intrusive, the incessant, the pervading moral apparatus of human society,—*then* he would be able to disregard and to forget what is due to intrinsic goodness and what is to be feared from intrinsic evil. No one will or can say that he now abstains from stealing oranges under a policeman's eyes from any motive, good or bad, save fear of the policeman; that motive is so evident, so pressing, so irresistible, that it becomes the only motive. But if he only thought the policeman *must* exist because he believed stealing oranges to be wrong, he would feel it quite possible to abstain from stealing oranges out of pure and unselfish considerations.

Assume that a person only knows a particular fact from a certain informant, and suppose that on a sudden he doubts that informant, of course his confidence in the communicated fact ceases, or is diminished. So, *if* all our knowledge of the religious part of morality be derived from the intrinsic impression of morality, as soon as we question the accuracy of the informant, that instant we must be dubious of the information. The derivative cannot be stronger than the original; cannot overpower it; must grow when it grows, and wane when it wanes.

But is our knowledge of the moral part of religion thus derivative and dependent? Two classes of disputants will deny it entirely: one class will say they derive their knowledge from Natural Theology; another will say they derive it from Revelation; and until the arguments of both classes are examined, the subject must remain in partial darkness. Natural theology is the simplest of theologies; it contains only a single argument, and establishes but one conclusion. Observing persons have gone to and fro through the earth, and they have accumulated a million illustrations of a single analogy. They have accumulated indications of design from all parts of the universe. They have not, indeed, shown that *matter* was created; the substance of matter, if there be a substance, shows no structure, no evidence of design: according to all common

belief, according to the admission of such scientific men as admit its existence, that matter is unorganised. By its nature it is a raw material; it is that to which manufacture, manipulation, design—call it what you like—is to be applied; necessarily therefore it shows no indication of design itself. The reasoners from the workmanship of man to that of God must always fail in this: man only adapts what he finds: God creates what He uses. But within its legitimate limits the argument from design has been most effectual for two thousand years. On a certain class of purely intellectual minds, who think more than they live, who reason more than they imagine, it has produced the strongest and most vivid conception of God which, with their experience, and their mental limitation, they are capable of receiving. It has shown that *out of the causes we know*, none is so likely to have worked up the substance of matter into its present form as a designing and powerful mind. *Subject to this assumption*, it shows that this mind intended to erect that mixed, composite, involved human society which we see. These theologians prove, for example, that man has a structure of body which enables him to be what he is, which prevents his being in appearance, and in most real particularities, different from what he is. They show that the physical world is constructed so as to enable man to be what he is, and to show what he is, so as to limit his power of being greatly different, or of seeming so. They show, in fact, that, if the expression be allowed, we live, as far as *they* can tell us, in a factory, the builder of which projected certain results, contrived certain large plans, devised certain particular machines, foresaw certain functions, which he meant for us, which he made our interest, which he gave us wages to perform. They show not, indeed, that an omnipotent Being created the universe, but that an able being has been (so to say) about it. They do not demonstrate that an infinite Being created all things, but they *do* show, and show so that the mass of ordinary men will comprehend and believe it, that a large mind has been concerned in manufacturing most things.

But these results do not constitute the interior essence; scarcely, indeed, begin the exterior outwork of a substantial

religion. They touch neither that part of it which moves men's hearts, nor that part which occasions our primary difficulty. They do not show us an eternal state of man hereafter, in which the anomalies of this world may be rectified and recompensed; they do not show us an infinite Perfection, distributing just reward with an omniscient accuracy, according to a perfect law. It is not, indeed, to be expected that natural philosophy should prove the immortality of man, since it does not prove the immortality of God. It shows that an artful and able designer has been concerned in the construction of the strange existing world; but may it not have been the last work of the great artist? There is nothing in contriving skill to evince immortality; nothing to prove that the "great artificer" has always been or is always going to be. Of his moral views we collect from natural theology as much as this. There are certain laws of the physical universe which cannot be broken without pain, which avenge themselves on those who overlook, neglect, or violate them. These were presumedly designed (according to the moral assumption of natural theology) for the end which they effect; they were doubtless meant to accomplish that which they conspicuously do. On a disregard of such laws, natural theology shows that the Providence of which it speaks has imposed a penalty; the *contriving* God (so to speak, for it is necessary to speak plainly) is opposed to recklessness. He does not wish His devices to be impaired or His plans neglected. Every animal has in natural theology, if not a mission, at least a function. There are certain results which a polyp must produce or die; certain others which a horse must effect, or it will be first in pain and then die too; certain other and more complex results which man must produce, or he also will suffer and perish. But recklessness is only a single form of vice: a watchful, heedful selfishness is another form. For the latter, there is no indication in natural theology of any divine disapprobation, or of any impending penalty. A heedful being contriving for himself, living in the framework of, adjusting himself with nice discernment and careful discretion to, the laws of the visible world, incurs no censure from the theology of design. On the contrary, he could justly say

he had done what was required of him. He had studiously observed, he could say, the rules of the factory in which he lived; he had finished his own work; he had not hindered any others from accomplishing theirs; he had complied with the arrangements of the establishment: natural theology seems to require no more. Self-absorbed foresight and contriving discretion may not be great virtues according to a high morality, or according to a true religion; but they are profitable in the visible world. They are the virtues of men skilful in what they see. Accordingly, they suit a theology which is exclusively based upon an analysis of the visible world, which computes physical profits and sensible results, which aims to show that Providence is prudent, that God is wise in His generation.

Natural theology, therefore, contains nothing to disturb the explanation we have given of our original difficulty. The most cursory examination of it would show as much. We have only to open the well-known volumes in which the munificence of a former generation has embalmed the most striking arguments of a theology which that generation valued at more than it is worth. We find there pictures of a bat's wing, of the human hand, of a calf's eye; and we are told how ingenious, how clever, so to say—for it is the true word—these contrivances are. But no one could learn, or expect to learn, from a calf's eye, that the Creator is pure, just, merciful; that He is eternal or omnipotent; that He rewards good, and punishes evil. Throughout all the physical world He sends rain upon the just and the unjust; and no refined analysis of that world will detect in it a preference of the former to the latter. As it is with the moral holiness of God, so it is with the immortality of man: no one could expect to discover by a minute inspection of the perishable body, what was the fate of the imperceptible soul. Physical science may examine the structure of the brain, but it cannot foresee the fortunes of the mind.

What, then, of Revelation? Does this informant disturb the solution of our problem? The change from the world of natural theology to that of any revelation is most striking. The most impressive characteristic of natural theology is its bareness. It accumulates facts and proves little; it has

voluminous evidences and a short creed. Accordingly, the reason why it does not disturb our philosophy is that its communications are insufficient. It does not impart to us *such* a knowledge of a divine rewarder and punisher, of future human punishment and future human reward, as would render it impossible to be disinterested and hardly possible not to be foreseeing and selfish, because it communicates *no* knowledge on the subject. It does not teach the divine characteristic which involves the difficulty; it does not tell, either, that part of man's future fate which involves it likewise. With revelation it is far otherwise. That informant is precise, full and clear. It tells us plainly what God is; it warns us what may happen, and easily happen, to ourselves. We learn from it that God is the divine ruler; we learn from it that we are punishable creatures, whose fate depends on ourselves. The observations which have been justly made on natural theology are here entirely inapplicable. We have passed from a *vacuum* into a *plenum*.

The real reason why revealed religion does not invalidate our pre-existing moral nature, is because it is itself dependent on that nature. When we examine the evidence for revelation we alight at once on a great and fundamental postulate; we assume that God is veracious; we are so familiar with this great truth, that we hardly think of it save as an axiom; both the readers of the treatises on the evidences and the writers of them pass rapidly and easily over it. But, putting aside for a moment the evidence of our inner consciousness, and regarding the subject with the pure intellect and bare eyes, the assumption is an audacious one. How do we know that it is true? We have proved by natural theology that a designing Being, of great power, considerable age, ingenious habits, and benevolent motives, somewhere exists; but how do we know that Being to be "veracious"? We see that among human beings, the class of intellectual beings of whom we know most, and whom we can observe best, veracity is a rare virtue. We know that some nations seem wholly destitute of it, and that one sex in all countries is deficient in it. We know that a human being may have great power, and not tell

the truth; ingenious habits, and not tell the truth; kind intentions, and not tell the truth. Why may not a superhuman Being be constituted in the same way, possess a character similarly mixed, be remarkable not only for morals similar to man's, but also for defects analogous to his? Our inner nature revolts at the supposition; but we are not now concerned with our inner nature; we have, for the sake of distinctness, abstracted and left it on one side. We are dealing now not with the evidence of the heart, but with the evidence of the eyes; we are discussing not what really is, but what would seem to be—what is all we could know to be, if we had only five senses and a reasoning understanding. From these informants, how could we know enough of the ingenious unknown Being, who is so useful in the world, as to be confident He would tell us the truth in every case? How could we presume to guess His unexperienced speech, His latent motives, His imperceptible character? Our knowledge of the moral part of the Divine character, of His veracity—as well as of His justice—comes from our own moral nature. We feel that God is holy, just as we feel that holiness *is* holiness; just as we know by internal consciousness that goodness is good in itself, and by itself; just as we know that God in Himself is pure and holy. We feel that God is true, for veracity is a part of holiness and a condition of purity. But if we did not think holiness to be excellent in itself, if we did not feel it to be a motive unaffected by consequences and independent of calculation, our belief in the Divine holiness would fade away, and with it would fade our belief in the Divine veracity also.

Revelation, therefore, cannot undermine the very principle upon which it is itself dependent. Our notion of the character of God being revealed to us by our moral nature, cannot impair or weaken the conclusion of that nature. This is the meaning of the profound saying of Coleridge, that "*all* religion is revealed".[1] He meant that all knowledge of God's character which is worth naming or regarding, which excites any

[1] *Aids to Reflection*, sub-head, "Aphorisms on that which is indeed Spiritual Religion," comment on Aphorism vii. (Forrest Morgan.)

portion of the religious sentiment, which excites our love, our awe, or our fear, is communicated to us by our internal nature, by that spirit within us which is open to a higher world, by that spirit which is in some sense God's Spirit. True religion of this sort does not impair the moral spirit which revealed it; it does not dare do so, for it knows that spirit to be its only evidence.

But all religion is not true. A superstitious mind permits a certain aspect of God's character, say its justice, to obtain an exclusive hold on it, to tyrannise over it, to absorb it. The soul becomes bound down by the weight of its own revelation. Conscience is overshadowed, weakened, and almost destroyed by the very idea which it originally suggested, and of which it is really the only reliable informant. Such minds are incapable of true virtue. The essential opposition which is alleged to exist between morality and *all* religion does exist between morality and *their* religion. They have a selfish fear of the future, which destroys their disinterestedness, and almost destroys their manhood.

The same effect is undeniably produced on many minds —not necessarily produced, but in fact produced—by a belief in revelation. They are fearful of future punishment, because some being in the air has threatened it. They have not the true belief in the Divine holiness which arises from a love of holiness; they have not the true conception of God which was suggested by conscience, and is kept alive by the activity of conscience; but they have a vague persuasion that a great Personage has asserted this, and why they should believe that Personage they do not ask or know. While revelation remains connected in the mind with the spirituality on which it is based, it is as consistent with true morality as religion of any other sort; but if disconnected from that spirituality, if it has become an isolated terrific tenet, like any other superstition, it is inconsistent.

The original difficulty with which we started, and the true answer to that difficulty, may be summed up thus: The objection is, that the extrinsic motive to goodness (which religion reveals) must absorb the intrinsic motives to goodness

(which morality reveals). The answer is, that the second revelation is contingent upon the first; that those only have a substantial ground for believing the extrinsic motive who retain a lively confidence in the intrinsic. Perhaps some may think this principle too plain; perhaps others may think it too unimportant to justify so long an exposition and such a strenuous inculcation. But if we dwell upon it and trace it to its attendant results and consequences, we shall find that it will account for more of the world than almost any other single principle—at any rate, will explain much which puzzles us, and much which is important to us.

First, this principle will explain to us the use and the necessity of what we may call the *screen* of the physical world. Every one who has religious ideas must have been puzzled by what we may call the irrelevancy of creation to his religion. We find ourselves lodged in a vast theatre, in which a ceaseless action, a perpetual shifting of scenes, an unresting life, is going forward; and that life seems physical, unmoral, having no relation to what our souls tell us to be great and good, to what religion says is the design of all things. Especially when we see any new objects, or scenes, or countries, we feel this. Look at a great tropical plant, with large leaves stretching everywhere, and great stalks branching out on all sides; with a big beetle on a leaf, and a humming-bird on a branch, and an ugly lizard just below. What has such an object to do with *us*—with anything we can conceive, or hope, or imagine? What *could* it be created for, if creation has a moral end and object? Or go into a gravel-pit, or stone-quarry; you see there a vast accumulation of dull matter, yellow or grey, and you ask, involuntarily and of necessity, why is all this waste and irrelevant production, as it would seem, of material? Can anything seem more stupid than a big stone *as* a big stone, than gravel for gravel's sake? What is the use of such cumbrous, inexpressive objects in a world where there are minds to be filled, and imaginations to be aroused, and souls to be saved? A clever sceptic once said on reading Paley that *he* thought the universe was a furniture warehouse for unknown beings; he assented to the indications of design

visible in many places, but what the end of most objects was, why *such* things were, what was the ultimate object contemplated by the whole, he could not understand. He thought "divines are right in saying that much of the universe has an expression, but surely sceptics are right in saying that as much or more has no expression". Some of the world seems designed to show a little of God; but much more seems also designed to hide Him and keep Him off. The reply is, that if morality is to be disinterested, some such irrelevant universe is essential. Life, moral life, the life of tempted beings capable of virtue and liable to vice, of necessity involves a theatre of some sort; it could not be carried on in a vast vacuum; *some* means of communication between mind and mind, *some* external motive to question inward impulses, *some* outward events as the result of past action and the stimulus to new action, seem essential to the life of a voluntary moral being, to a being tempted as a man is, living as a man lives. The only admissible question is the nature of that theatre. Is it to be in all its parts and objects expressive of God's character and communicative of man's fate? or is it, as many say, in most parts to express nothing and tell nothing? The reply is, that *if* the universe were to be incessantly expressive and incessantly communicative, morality would be impossible; we should live under the unceasing pressure of a supernatural interference, which would give us selfish motives for doing everything, which would menace us with supernatural punishment if we left anything undone. We should be living in a *chastising* machine, of which the secret would be patent and the penalties apparent. We are startled to find a universe we did not expect. But if we lived in the universe we did expect, the life which we lead, and were meant to lead, would be impossible. We should expect a punitive world sanctioning moral laws, and the perpetual punishment of those laws would be so glaringly apparent that true virtue would become impossible. An "unfeeling Nature,"[1] an unmoral universe, a sun that shines and a rain which falls equally on the evil and on the good, are essential to morality in a being

[1] Goethe: "The Godlike" (short poem).

free like man, and created as man was. A miscellaneous world is a suitable theatre for a single-minded life, and, so far as we can see, the only one.

The same sort of reasoning partly elucidates, even if it does not explain, the brevity of our apparent life. If visible life were eternal, future punishments must be visible. We should meet in our streets with old, old men enduring the consequences of offences which happened before we were born. We should not see, perhaps, old age as we now see it; decrepitude would be unknown to us. If there was immortal life on earth, there would probably also be immortal youth; at any rate, immortal activity. The perpetuity of existence would not be divided from the perpetuity of what makes life desirable, of what makes effective life possible. But if children saw their fathers, and their fathers' fathers, and their fathers' ancestors, in an unending chain, suffering penalties for certain acts, and obtaining rewards for certain deeds, how is it possible that they could act otherwise than according to those visible and evident examples? The consecutive tradition of self-interest would be so strong among a perpetual race of immortal men that disinterested virtue would be not so much impracticable as unthought-of and unknown. The exact line of real self-benefit would be chalked out so plainly, so conspicuously, so glaringly, that no other action would be conceivable, or possible. The evidence of *all* consequences would be like the evidences of legal consequences now, only infinitely more effective and infinitely more perceptible. In human law, the *detection* of the offence by man is a prerequisite of all punishment by man. An offence not proved to the "satisfaction of the court" escapes the judgment of the court. But in a visible immortal life, this prerequisite would not be needful. *If* there be a future punishment, and *if* man lived for all futurity upon earth, that future punishment would be on earth, and it would be inflicted by God. Undetected crime, that general bad character without specific proved offence, which now mocks all law and laughs at visible punishment, would then, under our very eyes, receive that punishment. Job's friends kindly argued with him, "You are

suffering, therefore you are guilty". And the argument was bad, because they only saw an exceptional accident in the life of a good man, not his entire life through a subsequent eternity; but if that eternal life had been passed in continuous residence on this globe, if notorious bad fortune had pursued him through eternity in the nineteenth generation, his descendants might well have said, "Oh, Job, there is something wrong in you, for you never come out right". A great historian has observed,—

"That honesty is the best policy, is a maxim which we firmly believe to be generally correct, even with respect to the temporal interest of individuals; but with respect to societies, the rule is subject to still fewer exceptions, and that for this reason, that the life of societies is larger than that of individuals. It is possible to mention men who have owed great worldly prosperity to breaches of private faith; but we doubt whether it be possible to mention a state which has, on the whole, been a gainer by a breach of public faith." [1]

If the visible life of individuals were yet longer than the life of societies, the rule would be subject to still fewer exceptions; if that visible life were eternal, the rule would be subject to no exceptions; the staring evidence of conspicuous results would purge temptation out of the world.

The physical world now rewards what we may call the physical virtues, and punishes what we may call the physical vices. There is a certain state of the body which is a condition of physical well-being, and (as life is constituted) very much of all well-being. If by gross excess any man should impair that condition, physical law will punish him. The body is our schoolmaster to bring us to the soul; it enforces on us the preparatory merits, it scourges out of us the preparatory defects. The law of human government is similar; it enforces on us that adherence to obvious virtue, and that avoidance of obvious vice, which are the essential preliminaries of real virtue. There is no true virtue or vice, so long as physical law and human law are what they are in any such matters. The dread of the penalties is too powerful not to extinguish (speaking generally, and peculiar cases excepted) all other motives. But these teachers strengthen the mental

[1] Macaulay: "Essay on Lord Clive".

instruments of real virtue. They strengthen our will; they hurt our vanity; they confirm our manhood. Physical law and human law train and build up, if the expression may be permitted, that good pagan, that sound-bodied, moderate, careful creature, out of which a good Christian may, if he will and by God's help, in the end be constructed. If visible life were eternal instead of temporary, the same intense discipline which so usefully creates the preparatory prerequisites would likewise efface the possibility of disinterested virtue.

Again, the great scene of human life may be explained, or at least illustrated, in like manner: *we are souls in the disguise of animals.* We lead a life in great part neither good nor evil, neither wicked nor excellent. The larger number of men seem to an outside observer to walk through life in a torpid sort of sleep. They are decent in their morals, respectable in their manners, stupid in their conversation. The incentives of their life are outward; its penalties are outward too. The life of such people seems to some men always—to many men at times—inexplicable. But if such beings were not permitted in the world, perhaps a higher life might be impossible for any beings. They act like a living screen, just as we say matter acts like a dead screen. It is not desirable that the results of goodness should be distinctly apparent; and if all human life were intensely and exclusively moral; if all men were with all their strength pursuing good or pursuing evil, the isolated consequences of that isolated principle must be apparent; at least, could scarcely fail to be so. If one set of men were cooped up in the exclusive pursuit of virtue, and were very ardent and warm about it, and another set of men were eager in the pursuit of evil, and cared for nothing but evil, the world would fall asunder into two dissimilar halves. If goodness in the visible world had *any*, the least, tendency to produce visible happiness, then incessant goodness would be very happy. The accumulations of the slight tendency by perpetual renewal would amount of necessity to a vast sum-total. Incessant badness would produce awful misery. Those absorbed in vice would be warnings dangerous to disinterestedness; those absorbed in virtue,

attractions and examples almost more dangerous. The mischief is prevented by those *unabsorbed*, purposeless, divided characters which seem to puzzle us. They complicate human life, and they do so the more effectually that they typify and represent so much of what every man feels and must feel within himself. In each man there is so much which is unmoral, so much which comes from an unknown origin, and passes forward to an unknown destination, which is of the earth, earthy; which has nothing to do with hell or heaven; which occupies a middle place not recognised in any theology; which is hateful both to the impetuous "friends of God" and His most eager enemies. This pervading and potent element involves life as it were in confusion and hurry. We do not see distinctly whither we are going. Disinterestedness is possible, for calculation is confused. Doubtless, even on earth, virtue of all kinds eventually must have, on a large average of cases, some slight tendency to produce happiness. This earth is an extract from the moral universe—partakes its nature. But that tendency is too slight to be a considerable motive to high action; it would not be discovered but for the inward principle which sets us to look for it; and even when we find it, it is transient, and small, and dubious. It is lost in the vast results of the unmoral universe, in the vague shows, the multiform spectacle of human life.

Again, we may understand why the convictions of what duty is, and what religion is, vary so much and so often among men. If all our convictions on these points, on these infinitely important points, were identical and alike, an accumulated public opinion would oppress us, would destroy the freedom of our action and the purity of our virtue. If every one said that certain penalties would be the consequence of certain actions, we should believe that the consequences would be so and so, not because we felt those actions to be intrinsically bad, but because we were told that such would be the consequences. We should believe upon report, and a vague impression would haunt us, not produced by our own conscience, or our own sense of right and wrong, and would impair both our manhood and our

virtue. The extraordinary discrepancies of believed religion and believed morality have weighed on many and will weigh on many; but they have this use—they enable men to be disinterested. As there is no sanctioned invincible firm custom, there are no customary penalties, there is nothing men must shun; as the world has not made up its mind, there is no executioner of the world ready to enforce that mind upon every one.

Lastly, the same essential argument may be applied to a problem yet more delicate and difficult, to one which it is difficult to treat in reviewer's phraseology. Why is God so far from us? is the agonising question which has depressed so many hearts, so long as we know there were hearts, has puzzled so many intellects since intellects began to puzzle themselves. But the moral part of God's character could not be shown to us with sensible conspicuous evidence; it could not be shown to us as Fleet Street is shown to us, without impairing the first prerequisite of disinterestedness, and the primary condition of man's virtue. And if the moral aspect of God's character must of necessity be somewhat hidden from us, other aspects of it must be equally hidden. An infinite Being may be viewed under innumerable aspects. God has many qualities in His essence which the word "moral" does not exhaust, which it does not even hint at. Perhaps this essay has seemed to read too sternly; as if the moral side of the Divine character, which is and must be to imperfect beings in some sense a terrible side,—as if the moral side of human life, which must be to mankind not always a pleasant side,—had been forced into an exclusive prominence which of right did not belong to it. But the *attractive* aspects of God's character must not be made more apparent to such a being as man than His chastening and severer aspects. We must not be invited to approach the Holy of Holies without being made aware, painfully aware, what Holiness is. We must know our own unworthiness ere we are fit to approach or imagine an Infinite Perfection. The most nauseous of false religions is that which affects a fulsome fondness for a Being not to be thought of without awe, or spoken of without reluctance.

On the whole, therefore, the necessary ignorance of man explains to us much; it shows us that we could not be what we ought to be, if we lived in the sort of universe we should expect. It shows us that a latent Providence, a confused life, an odd material world, an existence broken short in the midst and on a sudden, are not real difficulties, but real helps; that they, or something like them, are essential conditions of a moral life to a subordinate being. If we steadily remember that we only know the ultimate fate, the extrinsic consequences of vice and virtue, because we know of their inherent nature and intrinsic qualities, and that any other evidence of the first would destroy the possibility of the second, *then* much which used to puzzle us may become clear to us.

But it may be said, What sort of evidence is this on which you base the future moral life of man, and the present existence of a moral Providence? Is it not impalpable? It is so and necessarily so. If a consecutive logical deduction, such as has often been sought between an immutable morality and a true religion, could in fact be found, we should be again met with our fundamental difficulty, though in a disguised and secondary form. Morality might fall out of sight because religion was obtruded upon us. Morality would be the axiom, religion the deduction; and as a geometer does not keep Euclid's axioms in his head when he is employed upon conic sections, as a student of the differential calculus may half forget the commencement of algebra,—so the great truths of religion, if rigorously and mathematically deduced from the beginnings of morality, might overshadow and destroy those "beggarly elements". No one who has proved important doctrines by rigorous reasoning always retains in his mind the primitive principles from which he set out. As the concrete deductions advance, the primary abstractions recede. Happily, the connection between morality and religion is of a very different kind. Religion (in its moral part) is a secondary impression, produced and kept alive by the first impression of morality. The intensity of the second feeling depends on the continued intensity of the first feeling.

The highest part of human belief is based upon certain

developable instincts. Not the most important, but the most obvious of these, is the instinct of beauty. Since the commencement of speculation, ingenious thinkers, who delight in difficulties, have rejoiced to draw out at length the difficulties of the subject. It is said, How can you be certain that there is such an attribute as beauty, when no one is sure what it is, or to what it should be applied? A barbarian thinks one thing charming, the Greek another. Modern nations have a standard different most materially from the ancient standard—founded upon it in several important respects, no doubt, but differing from it in others as important, and almost equally striking. Even within the limits of modern nations this standard differs. The taste of the vulgar is one thing, the taste of the refined and cultivated is altogether at variance with it. The mass of mankind prefer a gaudy modern daub to a faded picture by Sir Joshua, or to the cartoons of Raphael. What certainty, the sceptic triumphantly asks, can there be in matters on which people differ so much, on which it seems so impossible to argue; which seem to depend on causes and relations simply personal; which are susceptible of no positive test or ascertained criterion? You talk of impalpability, he adds; here it is in perfection. But these recondite doubts impose on no one. Not a single educated person would sleep less soundly if he were told that his life depended on the correctness of his notion that the cartoons of Raphael are more sublime and beautiful than a common daub. He cannot prove it, and he cannot prove that Charles the First was beheaded; but he is quite as certain of one as of the other. This is an instance of an obvious, unmistakable instinct, which does produce effectual belief, though sceptics explain to us that it should not.

The nature of this instinct differs altogether from that of those intuitive and universal axioms which are borne in infallibly upon all the human race, in every age and every place. It is not like the assertion that "two straight lines cannot enclose a space," or the truth that two and two make four. These are believed by every one, and no one can dream of not believing them. But half of mankind would

reject the idea that the cartoons were in any sense admirable; they would prefer the overgrown enormities of West, which are side by side with them. The characteristic peculiarity of this instinct is, not that it is irresistible, but that it is *developable*. The higher students of the subject, the more cultivated, meditate upon it, acquire a new sense, which conveys truth to them, though others are ignorant of it, and though they themselves cannot impart it to those others. The appeal is not to the many, as with axioms of Euclid, but to those few—the exceptional few—at whom the many scoff.

The case is similar with the yet higher instincts of morality and of religion. It is idle to pretend that much of them can be found among bloody savages, or simple and remote islanders, or a degraded populace. It is still idler to fancy that because they cannot be discovered there full-grown, and complete, and paramount, there is no evidence for them, and no basis for relying upon them. They resemble the instinct of beauty precisely. The evidence of the few—of the small, high-minded minority, who are the exception of ages, and the salt of the earth—outweighs the evidence of countless myriads who live as their fathers lived, think as they thought, die as they died; who would have lived and died in the very contrary impressions, if by chance they had inherited these instead of the others. The criterion of true beauty is with those (and they are not many) who have a sense of true beauty; the criterion of true morality is with those who have a sense of true morality; the criterion of true religion is with those who have a sense of true religion.

Nor can this defect of an absolute criterion throw the world into confusion. We see it does not, and there was no reason to expect it would. We all of us feel an analogous fluctuation and variation in ourselves. We all of us feel that there are times in which first principles seem borne in upon us by evidence as bright as noonday, and that there are also times in which that evidence is much less, in which it seems to fade away, in which we reckon up the number of persons who differ from us, who reject our principles; times at which

we ask, Who are *we*, that we should be right and other men wrong? The unbelieving moods of each mind are as certain as the unbelieving state of much of the world. But no sound mind permits itself to be permanently disturbed, though it may be transiently distracted, by these variations in its own state. We have a *criterion* faculty within us, which tells us which are lower moods and which are higher. This faculty is a phase of conscience, and if at its bidding we struggle *with* the good moods, and *against* the bad moods, we shall find that great beliefs remain, and that mean beliefs pass away.

There is an analogous phenomenon in the history of the world. Beliefs altogether differ at the base of society, but they agree, or tend to agree, at its summit. As society goes on, the standard of beauty, and of morality, and of religion also, tends to become fixed. The creeds of the higher classes throughout the world, though far from identical in these respects, are not entirely unlike, approach to similarity, approach to it more and more as cultivation augments, goodness improves, and disturbing agencies fall aside.

> "The Ethiop gods have Ethiop lips,
> Bronze cheeks, and woolly hair;
> The Grecian gods are like the Greeks,
> As keen-eyed, cold, and fair."

Such is the various and miscellaneous religion of barbarism; but the religion and the morality of all the best among all nations tend more and more to be the same with "the progress of the suns," and as society itself improves.

The instincts of morality and religion, though we have called them two for facility of speech, run into one another, and in practical human nature are not easily separated. The distinction, like so many others in mental philosophy, is not drawn where accurate science would have directed, but where the first notions of mankind, and the necessity of easy speaking, in a language shaped according to those notions, have suggested. In a refined analysis, the instinct of religion, as we have called it, is a complex aggregate of various instincts, not a single and homogeneous one. But to analyse these, or even to name them, would be far from our purpose now. Our

business is with the relation between the instinct of morality and that of religion, and with no other perplexities or difficulties. The instinct of morality is the basis, and the instinct of moral religion is based upon it, and arises out of it. We feel first the intrinsic qualities of good actions and bad actions; then, as the Greek proverb expressed it, "Where there is shame there is fear"; we expect consequences apportioned to our actions, good and evil; lastly, for within the limits of purely moral ideas there is no higher stage, we rise to the conception of Him who in His wisdom adjusts and allots those far-off consequences to those conspicuous actions. The higher instinct is based on the lower; would fade in the mind should the lower fade. The coalescence of instinct effects what no other contrivance known to us could effect; it enables us to be disinterested, although we know the consequences of evil actions, because conscience is the revealing sensation, and we only know those consequences so long as we are disinterested.

These fundamental difficulties of life and morals are little discussed. Few think of them clearly, and still fewer speak of them much. But they cloud the brain and confuse the hopes of many who never stated them explicitly to themselves, and never heard them stated explicitly by others. Meanwhile superficial difficulties are in every one's mouth; we are deafened with controversies on remote matters which do not concern us; we are confused with "Aids to Faith" which neither harm nor help us. A tumult of irrelevant theology is in the air which oppresses men's heads, and darkens their future, and scatters their hopes. For such a calamity there is no thorough cure; it belongs to the confused epoch of an age of transition, and is inseparable from it. But the best palliative is a steady attention to primary difficulties—if possible, a clear mastery over them; if not, a distinct knowledge how we stand respecting them. The shrewdest man of the world who ever lived tells us, "That he who begins in certainties shall end in doubts; but he who begins in doubts shall end in certainties";[1] and the maxim is even more applicable to matters which are not of this world than to those which are.

[1] Bacon: *Advancement of Learning*, book i. (page 52, Bohn).

MR. CLOUGH'S POEMS.[1]

(1862.)

NO one can be more rigid than we are in our rules[2] as to the publication of remains and memoirs. It is very natural that the friends of a cultivated man who seemed about to do something, but who died before he did it, should desire to publish to the world the grounds of their faith, and the little symptoms of his immature excellence. But though they act very naturally, they act very unwisely. In the present state of the world there are too many half-excellent people: there is a superfluity of persons who have all the knowledge, all the culture, all the requisite taste,—all the tools, in short, of achievement, but who are deficient in the latent impulse and secret vigour which alone can turn such instruments to account. They have all the outward and visible signs of future success; they want the invisible spirit, which can only be demonstrated by trial and victory. Nothing, therefore, is more tedious or more worthless than the posthumous delineation of the possible successes of one who did not succeed. The dreadful remains of nice young persons which abound among us prove almost nothing as to the future fate of those persons, if they had survived. We can only tell that any one is a man of genius by his having produced some work of genius. Young men must practise themselves in youthful essays; and to some of their friends these may seem works not only of fair promise, but of achieved excellence. The cold world of critics and readers will not, however, think so; that world well understands the distinction between promise

[1] *Poems.* By Arthur Hugh Clough, sometime Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. With a Memoir. Macmillan.

[2] This essay was originally published in *The National Review.*

and performance, and sees that these laudable *juvenilia* differ from good books as much as legitimate bills of exchange differ from actual cash.

If we did not believe that Mr. Clough's poems, or at least several of them, had real merit, not as promissory germs, but as completed performances, it would not seem to us to be within our province to notice them. Nor, if Mr. Clough were now living among us, would he wish us to do so. The marked peculiarity, and, so to say, the *flavour* of his mind, was a sort of truthful scepticism, which made him anxious never to overstate his own assurance of anything; which disinclined him to overrate the doings of his friends; and which absolutely compelled him to underrate his own past writings, as well as his capability for future literary success. He could not have borne to have his poems reviewed with "nice remarks" and sentimental epithets of insincere praise. He was equal to his precept:—

> "Where are the great, whom thou wouldst wish to praise thee?
> Where are the pure, whom thou wouldst choose to love thee?
> Where are the brave, to stand supreme above thee,
> Whose high commands would cheer, whose chiding raise thee?
> Seek, seeker, in thyself; submit to find
> In the stones, bread, and life in the blank mind."

To offer petty praise and posthumous compliments to a stoic of this temper, is like buying sugar-plums for St. Simon Stylites. We venture to write an article on Mr. Clough, because we believe that his poems depict an intellect in a state which is always natural "to such a being as man in such a world as the present," which is peculiarly natural to us just now; and because we believe that many of these poems are very remarkable for true vigour and artistic excellence, although they certainly have defects and shortcomings, which would have been lessened, if not removed, if their author had lived longer and had written more.

In a certain sense there are two great opinions about everything. There are two about the universe itself. The world as we know it is this. There is a vast, visible, indisputable sphere, of which we never lose the consciousness, of which no one

seriously denies the existence, about the most important part of which most people agree tolerably and fairly. On the other hand, there is the invisible world, about which men are not agreed at all, which all but the faintest minority admit to exist somehow and somewhere, but as to the nature or locality of which there is no efficient popular demonstration, no such compulsory argument as will *force* the unwilling conviction of any one disposed to denial. As our minds rise, as our knowledge enlarges, as our wisdom grows, as our instincts deepen, our conviction of this invisible world is daily strengthened, and our estimate of its nature is continually improved. But—and this is the most striking peculiarity of the whole subject—the more we improve, the higher we rise, the nobler we conceive the unseen world which is in us and about us, in which we live and move, the more unlike that world becomes to the world which we *do* see. The divinities of Olympus were in a very plain and intelligible sense part and parcel of this earth; they were better specimens than could be found below, but they belonged to extant species; they were better editions of visible existences; they were like the heroines whom young men imagine after seeing the young ladies of their vicinity—they were better and handsomer, but they were of the same sort; they had never been seen, but they might have been seen any day. So too of the God with whom the Patriarch wrestled; he might have been wrestled with even if he was not; he was that sort of person. If we contrast with these the God of whom Christ speaks—the God who has not been seen at any time, whom no man hath seen or can see, who is infinite in nature, whose ways are past finding out—the transition is palpable. We have passed from gods—from an invisible world, which is similar to, which is a *natural appendix* to, the world in which we live—and we have come to believe in an invisible world, which is altogether unlike that which we see, which is certainly not opposed to our experience, but is altogether beyond and unlike our experience; which belongs to another set of things altogether; which is, as we speak, transcendental. The "possible" of early barbarism is like the reality of early barbarism; the "may be," the "great perhaps," of late

civilisation is most unlike the earth, whether barbaric or civilised.

Two opinions as to the universe naturally result from this fundamental contrast. There are plenty of minds, like that of Voltaire, who have simply no sense or perception of the invisible world whatever, who have no ear for religion, who are in the technical sense unconverted, whom no conceivable process could convert without altering what to bystanders and ordinary observers is their identity. They are, as a rule, acute, sensible, discerning, and humane; but the first observation which the most ordinary person would make as to them is, that they are "limited"; they understand palpable existence; they elaborate it, and beautify and improve it; but an admiring bystander, who can do none of these things, who can beautify nothing, who, if he tried, would only make what is ugly uglier, is conscious of a latent superiority, which he can hardly help connecting with his apparent inferiority. We cannot write Voltaire's sentences; we cannot make things as clear as he made them; but we do not much care for our deficiency. Perhaps we think "things ought not to be so plain as all that". There is a hidden, secret, unknown side to this universe, which these picturesque painters of the visible, these many-handed manipulators of the palpable, are not aware of, which would spoil their dexterity if it were displayed on them. Sleep-walkers can tread safely on the very edge of a precipice; but those who see, cannot. On the other hand, there are those whose minds have not only been converted, but in some sense *inverted*. They are so occupied with the invisible world as to be absorbed in it entirely; they have no true conception of that which stands plainly before them; they never look coolly at it, and are cross with those who do; they are wrapt up in their own faith as to an unseen existence; they rush upon mankind with "Ah, there it is! there it is!—don't you see it?" and so incur the ridicule of an age.

The best of us try to avoid both fates. We strive, more or less, to "make the best of both worlds". We know that the invisible world cannot be duly discerned, or perfectly appreciated. We know that we see as in a glass darkly; but still we

look on the glass. We frame to ourselves some image which we know to be incomplete, which probably is in part untrue, which we try to improve day by day, of which we do not deny the defects,—but which nevertheless is our "all"; which we hope, when the accounts are taken, may be found not utterly *unlike* the unknown reality. This is, as it seems, the best religion for finite beings, living, if we may say so, on the very edge of two dissimilar worlds, on the very line on which the infinite, unfathomable sea surges up, and just where the queer little bay of this world ends. We count the pebbles on the shore, and image to ourselves as best we may the secrets of the great deep.

There are, however, some minds (and of these Mr. Clough's was one) which will not accept what appears to be an intellectual destiny. They struggle against the limitations of mortality, and will not condescend to use the natural and needful aids of human thought. They will not *make their image*. They struggle after an "actual abstract". They feel, and they rightly feel, that every image, every translation, every mode of conception by which the human mind tries to place before itself the Divine mind, is imperfect, halting, changing. They feel, from their own experience, that there is no one such mode of representation which will suit their own minds at all times, and they smile with bitterness at the notion that they could contrive an image which will suit all other minds. They could not become fanatics or missionaries, or even common preachers, without forfeiting their natural dignity, and foregoing their very essence. To cry in the streets, to uplift their voice in Israel, to be "pained with hot thoughts," to be "preachers of a dream," would reverse their whole cast of mind. It would metamorphose them into something which omits every striking trait for which they were remarked, and which contains every trait for which they were not remarked. On the other hand, it would be quite as opposite to their whole nature to become followers of Voltaire. No one knows more certainly and feels more surely that there is an invisible world, than those very persons who decline to make an image or representation of it, who shrink with a nervous horror from every such attempt

when it is made by any others. All this inevitably leads to what common, practical people term a "curious" sort of mind. You do not know how to describe these "universal negatives," as they seem to be. They will not fall into place in the ordinary intellectual world anyhow. If you offer them any known religion, they "won't have that"; if you offer them no religion, they will not have that either; if you ask them to accept a new and as yet unrecognised religion, they altogether refuse to do so. They seem not only to believe in an "unknown God," but in a God whom no man can ever know. Mr. Clough has expressed, in a sort of lyric, what may be called their essential religion:—

"O Thou whose image in the shrine
Of human spirits dwells divine!
Which from that precinct once conveyed,
To be to outer day displayed,
Doth vanish, part, and leave behind
Mere blank and void of empty mind,
Which wilful fancy seeks in vain
With casual shapes to fill again!

"O Thou, that in our bosom's shrine
Dost dwell, unknown because divine!
I thought to speak, I thought to say,
'The light is here,' 'Behold the way,'
'The voice was thus,' and 'Thus the word,'
And 'Thus I saw,' and 'That I heard,'—
But from the lips that half essayed
The imperfect utterance fell unmade.

"O Thou, in that mysterious shrine
Enthroned, as I may say, divine!
I will not frame one thought of what
Thou mayest either be or not.
I will not prate of 'thus' and 'so,'
And be profane with 'yes' or 'no,'
Enough that in our soul and heart
Thou, whatso'er Thou mayest be, art."

It was exceedingly natural that Mr. Clough should incline to some such creed as this, with his character and in his circumstances. He had by nature, probably, an exceedingly real mind, in the good sense of that expression and the bad sense. The

actual visible world as it was, and as he saw it, exercised over him a compulsory influence. The hills among which he had wandered, the cities he had visited, the friends whom he knew, —these were his world. Many minds of the poetic sort easily melt down these palpable facts into some impalpable ether of their own. To such a mind as Shelley's the "solid earth" is an immaterial fact; it is not even a cumbersome difficulty—it is a preposterous imposture. Whatever may exist, all that *clay* does not exist; it would be too absurd to think so. Common persons can make nothing of this dreaminess; and Mr. Clough, though superficial observers set him down as a dreamer, could not make much either. To him, as to the mass of men, the vulgar, outward world was a primitive fact. "Taxes *is* true," as the miser said. Reconcile what you have to say with green peas, for green peas are certain; such was Mr. Clough's idea. He could not dissolve the world into credible ideas and then believe those ideas, as many poets have done. He could not catch up a creed as ordinary men do. He had a *straining*, inquisitive, critical mind; he scrutinised every idea before he took it in; he did not allow the moral forces of life to act as they should; he was not content to gain a belief "by going on living". He said,

> "*Action will furnish belief;* but will that belief be the true one? This is the point, you know."

He felt the coarse facts of the plain world so thoroughly that he could not readily take in anything which did not seem in accordance with them and like them. And what common idea of the invisible world seems in the least in accordance with them or like them?

A journal-writer in one of his poems has expressed this:—

> "Comfort has come to me here in the dreary streets of the city,
> Comfort—how do you think?—with a barrel-organ to bring it.
> Moping along the streets, and cursing my day as I wandered,
> All of a sudden my ear met the sound of an English psalm-tune.
> Comfort me it did, till indeed I was very near crying.
> Ah, there is some great truth, partial very likely, but needful,
> Lodged, I am strangely sure, in the tones of the English psalm-tune:
> Comfort it was at least; and I must take without question
> Comfort, however it come, in the dreary streets of the city.

"What with trusting myself, and seeking support from within me,
Almost I could believe I had gained a religious assurance,
Formed in my own poor soul a great moral basis to rest on.
Ah, but indeed I see, I feel it factitious entirely;
I refuse, reject, and put it utterly from me;
I will look straight out, see things, not try to evade them;
Fact shall be fact for me, and the Truth the Truth as ever,
Flexible, changeable, vague, and multiform, and doubtful.—
Off, and depart to the void, thou subtle, fanatical tempter!" [1]

Mr. Clough's fate in life had been such as to exaggerate this naturally peculiar temper. He was a pupil of Arnold's; one of his best, most susceptible and favourite pupils. Some years since there was much doubt and interest as to the effect of Arnold's teaching. His sudden death, so to say, cut his life in the middle, and opened a tempting discussion as to the effect of his teaching when those taught by him should have become men and not boys. The interest which his own character then awakened, and must always awaken, stimulated the discussion, and there was much doubt about it. But now we need doubt no longer. The Rugby "men" are *real* men, and the world can pronounce its judgment. Perhaps that part of the world which cares for such things has pronounced it. Dr. Arnold was almost indisputably an admirable master for a common English boy,—the small, apple-eating animal whom we know. He worked, he pounded, if the phrase may be used, into the boy a belief, or at any rate a floating, confused conception, that there are great subjects, that there are strange problems, that knowledge has an indefinite value, that life is a serious and solemn thing. The influence of Arnold's teaching upon the majority of his pupils was probably very vague, but very good. To impress on the ordinary Englishman a general notion of the importance of what is intellectual and the reality of what is supernatural, is the greatest benefit which can be conferred upon him. The common English mind is too coarse, sluggish, and worldly to take such lessons too much to heart. It is improved by them in many ways, and is not harmed by them at all. But there are a few minds which are very likely to think too much of such things. A

[1] "Amours de Voyage," v. 2.

susceptible, serious, intellectual boy may be injured by the incessant inculcation of the awfulness of life and the magnitude of great problems. It is not desirable to take this world too much *au sérieux;* most persons will not; and the one in a thousand who will, should not. Mr. Clough was one of those who will. He was one of Arnold's favourite pupils, because he gave heed so much to Arnold's teaching; and exactly because he gave heed to it, was it bad for him. He required quite another sort of teaching: to be told to take things easily; not to try to be wise overmuch; to be "something beside critical"; to go on living quietly and obviously, and see what truth would come to him. Mr. Clough had to his latest years what may be noticed in others of Arnold's disciples,—a fatigued way of looking at great subjects. It seemed as if he had been put into them before his time, had seen through them, heard all which could be said about them, had been bored by them, and had come to want something else.

A still worse consequence was, that the faith, the doctrinal teaching which Arnold impressed on the youths about him, was one personal to Arnold himself, which arose out of the peculiarities of his own character, which can only be explained by them. As soon as an inquisitive mind was thrown into a new intellectual atmosphere, and was obliged to naturalise itself in it, to consider the creed it had learned with reference to the facts which it encountered and met, much of that creed must fade away. There were inevitable difficulties in it, which only the personal peculiarities of Arnold prevented his perceiving, and which every one else must soon perceive. The new intellectual atmosphere into which Mr. Clough was thrown was peculiarly likely to have this disenchanting effect. It was the Oxford of Father Newman; an Oxford utterly different from Oxford as it is, or from the same place as it had been twenty years before. A complete estimate of that remarkable thinker cannot be given here; it would be no easy task even now, many years after his influence has declined, nor is it necessary for the present purpose. Two points are quite certain of Father Newman, and they are the only two which are at present material. He was undeniably a con-

summate master of the difficulties of the creeds of other men. With a profoundly religious organisation which was hard to satisfy, with an imagination which could not help setting before itself simply and exactly what different creeds would come to and mean in life, with an analysing and most subtle intellect which was sure to detect the weak point in an argument if a weak point there was, with a manner at once grave and fascinating,—he was a nearly perfect religious disputant, whatever may be his deficiencies as a religious teacher. The most accomplished theologian of another faith would have looked anxiously to the joints of his harness before entering the lists with an adversary so prompt and keen. To suppose that a youth fresh from Arnold's teaching, with a hasty faith in a scheme of thought radically inconsistent, should be able to endure such an encounter, was absurd. Arnold flattered himself that he was a principal opponent of Mr. Newman; but he was rather a principal fellow-labourer. There was but one quality in a common English boy which would have enabled him to resist such a reasoner as Mr. Newman. We have a heavy apathy on exciting topics, which enables us to leave dilemmas unsolved, to forget difficulties, to go about our pleasure or our business, and to leave the reasoner to pursue his logic; "anyhow he is very *long*"—*that* we comprehend. But it was exactly this happy apathy, this commonplace indifference, that Arnold prided himself on removing. He objected strenuously to Mr. Newman's creed, but he prepared anxiously the very soil in which that creed was sure to grow. A multitude of such minds as Mr. Clough's, from being Arnoldites, became Newmanites.

A second quality in Mr. Newman is at least equally clear. He was much better skilled in finding out the difficulties of other men's creeds than in discovering and stating a distinct basis for his own. In most of his characteristic works he does not even attempt it. His argument is essentially an argument *ad hominem*; an argument addressed to the present creed of the person with whom he is reasoning. He says: "Give up what you hold already, or accept what I now say; for that which you already hold involves it". Even in books where

he is especially called on to deal with matters of first principle, the result is unsatisfactory. We have heard it said that he has in later life accounted for the argumentative vehemence of his book *against* the Church of Rome by saying: "I did it as a duty; I *put* myself into a state of mind to write that book". And this is just the impression which his arguments give. His elementary principles seem *made*, not born. Very likely he would admit the fact, yet defend his practice. He would say: "Such a being as man is, in such a world as this is, *must* do so; he must make a venture for his religion; he may see a greater probability that the doctrine of the Church is true than that it is false; he may see before he believes in her that she has greater evidence than any other creed; but he must do the rest for himself. *By means of his will* he must put himself into a new state of mind; he must cast in his lot with the Church here and hereafter; *then* his belief will gradually strengthen; he will in time become sure of what she says." He undoubtedly, in the time of his power, persuaded many young men to try some such process as this. The weaker, the more credulous, and the more fervent, were able to persevere; those who had not distinct perceptions of real truth, who were dreamy and fanciful by nature, persevered without difficulty. But Mr. Clough could not do so; he felt it was "something factitious".[1] He began to speak of the "ruinous force of the will,"[2] and "our terrible notions of duty".[3] He ceased to be a Newmanite.

Thus Mr. Clough's career and life were exactly those most likely to develop and foster a morbid peculiarity of his intellect. He had, as we have explained, by nature an unusual difficulty in forming a creed as to the unseen world; he could not get the visible world out of his head; his strong grasp of plain facts and obvious matters was a difficulty to him. Too easily one great teacher inculcated a remarkable creed; then another great teacher took it away; then this second teacher made him believe for a time some of his own artificial faith; then it would not do. He fell back on that vague, impalpable, unembodied religion which we have attempted to describe.

[1] "Amours de Voyage." [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

He has himself given in a poem,[1] now first published, a very remarkable description of this curious state of mind. He has prefixed to it the characteristic motto, "*Il doutait de tout, même de l'amour*". It is the delineation of a certain love-passage in the life of a hesitating young gentleman, who was in Rome at the time of the revolution of 1848; who could not make up his mind about the revolution, who could not make up his mind whether he liked Rome, who could not make up his mind whether he liked the young lady, who let her go away without him, who went in pursuit of her, and could not make out which way to look for her,—who, in fine, has some sort of religion, but cannot himself tell what it is. The poem was not published in the author's lifetime, and there are some lines which we are persuaded he would have further polished, and some parts which he would have improved, if he had seen them in print. It is written in conversational hexameters, in a tone of semi-satire and half-belief. Part of the commencement is a good example of them:—

"Rome disappoints me much; I hardly as yet understand, but
Rubbishy seems the word that most exactly would suit it.
All the foolish destructions, and all the sillier savings,
All the incongruous things of past incompatible ages,
Seem to be treasured up here to make fools of present and future.
Would to heaven the old Goths had made a cleaner sweep of it!
Would to heaven some new ones would come and destroy these churches!
However, one can live in Rome as also in London.
Rome is better than London, because it is other than London.
It is a blessing, no doubt, to be rid, at least for a time, of
All one's friends and relations,—yourself (forgive me!) included,—
All the *assujettissement* of having been what one has been,
What one thinks one is, or thinks that others suppose one;
Yet, in despite of all, we turn like fools to the English.
Vernon has been my fate; who is here the same that you knew him,—
Making the tour, it seems, with friends of the name of Trevellyn.

"Rome disappoints me still; but I shrink and adapt myself to it.
Somehow a tyrannous sense of a superincumbent oppression
Still, wherever I go, accompanies ever, and makes me
Feel like a tree (shall I say?) buried under a ruin of brickwork.

[1] "Amours de Voyage."

Rome, believe me, my friend, is like its own Monte Testaceo,
Merely a marvellous mass of broken and castaway wine-pots.
Ye Gods! what do I want with this rubbish of ages departed,
Things that Nature abhors, the experiments that she has failed in?
What do I find in the Forum? An archway and two or three pillars.
Well, but St. Peter's? Alas, Bernini has filled it with sculpture!
No one can cavil, I grant, at the size of the great Coliseum.
Doubtless the notion of grand and capacious and massive amusement,
This the old Romans had; but tell me, is this an idea?
Yet of solidity much, but of splendour little is extant:
'Brickwork I found thee, and marble I left thee!' their Emperor vaunted;
'Marble I thought thee, and brickwork I find thee!' the Tourist may answer."

As he goes on he likes Rome rather better, but hazards the following imprecation on the Jesuits:—

"Luther, they say, was unwise; he didn't see how things were going;
Luther was foolish,—but, O great God! what call you Ignatius?
O my tolerant soul, be still! but you talk of barbarians,
Alaric, Attila, Genseric;—why, they came, they killed, they
Ravaged, and went on their way; but these vile, tyrannous Spaniards,
These are here still,—how long, O ye heavens, in the country of Dante?
These, that fanaticised Europe, which now can forget them, release not
This, their choicest of prey, this Italy; here you see them,—
Here, with emasculate pupils and gimcrack churches of Gesù,
Pseudo-learning and lies, confessional-boxes and postures,—
Here, with metallic beliefs and regimental devotions,—
Here, overcrusting with slime, perverting, defacing, debasing
Michael Angelo's dome, that had hung the Pantheon in heaven,
Raphael's Joys and Graces, and thy clear stars, Galileo!"

The plot of the poem is very simple, and certainly is not very exciting. The moving force, as in most novels of verse or prose, is the love of the hero for the heroine; but this love assuredly is not of a very impetuous and overpowering character. The interest of this story is precisely that it is not overpowering. The over-intellectual hero, over-anxious to be composed, will not submit himself to his love; over-fearful of what is voluntary and factitious, he will not make an effort and cast in his lot with it. He states his view of the subject better than we can state it:—

"I am in love, meantime, you think; no doubt you would think so.
I am in love, you say, with those letters, of course, you would say so.

I am in love, you declare. I think not so; yet I grant you
It is a pleasure indeed to converse with this girl. O, rare gift,
Rare felicity, this! she can talk in a rational way, can
Speak upon subjects that really are matters of mind and of thinking,
Yet in perfection retain her simplicity; never, one moment,
Never, however you urge it, however you tempt her, consents to
Step from ideas and fancies and loving sensations to those vain
Conscious understandings that vex the minds of mankind.
No, though she talk, it is music; her fingers desert not the keys; 'tis
Song, though you hear in the song the articulate vocables sounded,
Syllables singly and sweetly the words of melodious meaning.
I am in love, you say; I do not think so, exactly.
There are two different kinds, I believe, of human attraction:
One which simply disturbs, unsettles, and makes you uneasy,
And another that poises, retains, and fixes and holds you.
I have no doubt, for myself, in giving my voice for the latter.
I do not wish to be moved, but growing where I was growing,
There more truly to grow, to live where as yet I had languished.
I do not like being moved: for the will is excited; and action
Is a most dangerous thing; I tremble for something factitious,
Some malpractice of heart and illegitimate process;
We are so prone to these things, with our terrible notions of duty.
Ah, let me look, let me watch, let me wait, unhurried, unprompted!
Bid me not venture on aught that could alter or end what is present!
Say not, Time flies, and Occasion, that never returns, is departing!
Drive me not out, ye ill angels with fiery swords, from my Eden,
Waiting, and watching, and looking! Let love be its own inspiration!
Shall not a voice, if a voice there must be, from the airs that environ,
Yea, from the conscious heavens, without our knowledge or effort,
Break into audible words? And love be its own inspiration?"

It appears, however, that even this hesitating hero would have come to the point at last. In a book, at least the hero has nothing else to do. The inevitable restrictions of a pretty story hem him in; to wind up the plot, he must either propose or die, and usually he prefers proposing. Mr. Claude—for such is the name of Mr. Clough's hero—is evidently on his road towards the inevitable alternative, when his fate intercepts him by the help of a person who meant nothing less. There is a sister of the heroine, who is herself engaged to a rather quick person, and who cannot make out any one's conducting himself differently from her George Vernon. She writes:—

"Mr. Claude, you must know, is behaving a little bit better;
He and Papa are great friends; but he really is too *shilly-shally*,—
So unlike George! Yet I hope that the matter is going on fairly.
I shall, however, get George, before he goes, to say something.
Dearest Louise, how delightful to bring young people together!"

As the heroine says, "dear Georgina" wishes for nothing so much as to show her adroitness. George Vernon does interfere, and Mr. Claude may describe for himself the change it makes in his fate:—

"Tibur is beautiful too, and the orchard slopes, and the Anio
Falling, falling yet, to the ancient lyrical cadence;
Tibur and Anio's tide; and cool from Lucretilis ever,
With the Digentian stream, and with the Bandusian fountain,
Folded in Sabine recesses, the valley and villa of Horace:—
So not seeing I sung; so seeing and listening say I,
Here as I sit by the stream, as I gaze at the cell of the Sibyl,
Here with Albunea's home and the grove of Tiburnus beside me;[1]
Tivoli beautiful is, and musical, O Teverone,
Dashing from mountain to plain, thy parted impetuous waters!
Tivoli's waters and rocks; and fair under Monte Gennaro,
(Haunt even yet, I must think, as I wander and gaze, of the shadows,
Faded and pale, yet immortal, of Faunus, the nymphs, and the Graces,)
Fair in itself, and yet fairer with human completing creations,
Folded in Sabine recesses, the valley and villa of Horace:—
So not seeing I sung; so now—Nor seeing, nor hearing,
Neither by waterfall lulled, nor folded in sylvan embraces,
Neither by cell of the Sibyl, nor stepping the Monte Gennaro,
Seated on Anio's bank, nor sipping Bandusian waters,
But on Montorio's height, looking down on the tile-clad streets, the
Cupolas, crosses and domes, the bushes and the kitchen-gardens,
Which, by the grace of the Tibur, proclaim themselves Rome of the
Roman,—
But on Montorio's height, looking forth to the vapoury mountains,
Cheating the prisoner Hope with illusions of vision and fancy,—
But on Montorio's height with these weary soldiers by me,
Waiting till Oudinot enter, to reinstate Pope and Tourist.
. . . . . .
Yes, on Montorio's height for a last farewell of the city,—
So it appears; though then I was quite uncertain about it.
So, however, it was. And now to explain the proceeding.

[1] "——domus Albuneæ resonantis,
Et præceps Anio, et Tiburni lucus, et uda
Mobilibus pomaria rivis."

I was to go, as I told you, I think, with the people to Florence.
Only the day before, the foolish family Vernon
Made some uneasy remarks, as we walked to our lodging together,
As to intentions, forsooth, and so forth. I was astounded,
Horrified quite ; and obtaining just then, as it happened, an offer
(No common favour) of seeing the great Ludovisi collection,
Why, I made this a pretence, and wrote that they must excuse me.
How could I go ? Great Heavens ! to conduct a permitted flirtation.
Under those vulgar eyes, the observed of such observers !
Well, but I now, by a series of fine diplomatic inquiries,
Find from a sort of relation, a good and sensible woman,
Who is remaining at Rome with a brother too ill for removal,
That it was wholly unsanctioned, unknown,—not, I think, by Georgina.
She, however, ere this,—and that is the best of the story,—
She and the Vernon, thank Heaven, are wedded and gone—honey-
mooning.
So—on Montorio's height for a last farewell of the city.
Tibur I have not seen, nor the lakes that of old I had dreamt of ;
Tibur I shall not see, nor Anio's waters, nor deep en-
Folded in Sabine recesses the valley and villa of Horace ;
Tibur I shall not see ;—but something better I shall see.
Twice I have tried before, and failed in getting the horses ;
Twice I have tried and failed : this time it shall not be a failure."

But, of course, he does not reach Florence till the heroine and her family are gone ; and he hunts after them through North Italy, not very skilfully, and then he returns to Rome ; and he reflects, certainly not in a very dignified or heroic manner :—

"I cannot stay at Florence, not even to wait for a letter.
Galleries only oppress me. Remembrance of hope I had cherished
(Almost more than as hope, when I passed through Florence the first
time)
Lies like a sword in my soul. I am more a coward than ever,
Chicken-hearted, past thought. The *cafès* and waiters distress me.
All is unkind, and, alas ! I am ready for any one's kindness.
Oh, I knew it of old, and knew it, I thought, to perfection,
If there is any one thing in the world to preclude all kindness,
It is the need of it,—it is this sad, self-defeating dependence.
Why is this, Eustace ? Myself, were I stronger, I think I could tell you.
But it is odd when it comes. So plumb I the deeps of depression,
Daily in deeper, and find no support, no will, no purpose.
All my old strengths are gone. And yet I shall have to do something.
Ah, the key of our life, that passes all wards, opens all locks,
Is not *I will* but *I must*. I must,—I must,—and I do it.

"After all, do I know that I really cared so about her?
Do whatever I will, I cannot call up her image;
For when I close my eyes, I see, very likely St. Peter's,
Or the Pantheon façade, or Michael Angelo's figures,
Or, at a wish, when I please, the Alban hills and the Forum,—
But that face, those eyes,—ah no, never anything like them;
Only, try as I will, a sort of featureless outline,
And a pale blank orb, which no recollection will add to.
After all, perhaps there was something factitious about it;
I have had pain, it is true: I have wept, and so have the actors.

"At the last moment I have your letter, for which I was waiting;
I have taken my place, and see no good in inquiries.
Do nothing more, good Eustace, I pray you. It only will vex me.
Take no measures. Indeed, should we meet, I could not be certain;
All might be changed, you know. Or perhaps there was nothing to be changed.
It is a curious history, this; and yet I foresaw it;
I could have told it before. The Fates, it is clear, are against us;
For it is certain enough I met with the people you mention;
They were at Florence the day I returned there, and spoke to me even;
Stayed a week, saw me often; departed, and whither I know not.
Great is Fate, and is best. I believe in Providence partly.
What is ordained is right, and all that happens is ordered.
Ah, no, that isn't it. But yet I retain my conclusion.
I will go where I am led, and will not dictate to the chances.
Do nothing more, I beg. If you love me, forbear interfering."

And the heroine, like a sensible, quiet girl, sums up:—

"You have heard nothing; of course, I know you can have heard nothing.
Ah, well, more than once I have broken my purpose, and sometimes,
Only too often, have looked for the little lake steamer to bring him.
But it is only fancy,—I do not really expect it.
Oh, and you see I know so exactly how he would take it:
Finding the chances prevail against meeting again, he would banish
Forthwith every thought of the poor little possible hope, which
I myself could not help, perhaps, thinking only too much of;
He would resign himself and go. I see it exactly.
So I also submit, although in a different manner.
Can you not really come? We go very shortly to England."

And there, let us hope, she found a more satisfactory lover and husband.

The same defect which prevented Mr. Claude from obtaining his bride will prevent this poem from obtaining universal

I was to go, as I told you, I think, with the people to Florence.
Only the day before, the foolish family Vernon
Made some uneasy remarks, as we walked to our lodging together,
As to intentions, forsooth, and so forth. I was astounded,
Horrified quite ; and obtaining just then, as it happened, an offer
(No common favour) of seeing the great Ludovisi collection,
Why, I made this a pretence, and wrote that they must excuse me.
How could I go ? Great Heavens ! to conduct a permitted flirtation.
Under those vulgar eyes, the observed of such observers !
Well, but I now, by a series of fine diplomatic inquiries,
Find from a sort of relation, a good and sensible woman,
Who is remaining at Rome with a brother too ill for removal,
That it was wholly unsanctioned, unknown,—not, I think, by Georgina.
She, however, ere this,—and that is the best of the story,—
She and the Vernon, thank Heaven, are wedded and gone—honey-mooning.
So—on Montorio's height for a last farewell of the city.
Tibur I have not seen, nor the lakes that of old I had dreamt of ;
Tibur I shall not see, nor Anio's waters, nor deep en-
Folded in Sabine recesses the valley and villa of Horace ;
Tibur I shall not see ;—but something better I shall see.
Twice I have tried before, and failed in getting the horses ;
Twice I have tried and failed : this time it shall not be a failure."

But, of course, he does not reach Florence till the heroine and her family are gone ; and he hunts after them through North Italy, not very skilfully, and then he returns to Rome ; and he reflects, certainly not in a very dignified or heroic manner :—

"I cannot stay at Florence, not even to wait for a letter.
Galleries only oppress me. Remembrance of hope I had cherished
(Almost more than as hope, when I passed through Florence the first time)
Lies like a sword in my soul. I am more a coward than ever,
Chicken-hearted, past thought. The *cafés* and waiters distress me.
All is unkind, and, alas ! I am ready for any one's kindness.
Oh, I knew it of old, and knew it, I thought, to perfection,
If there is any one thing in the world to preclude all kindness,
It is the need of it,—it is this sad, self-defeating dependence.
Why is this, Eustace ? Myself, were I stronger, I think I could tell you.
But it is odd when it comes. So plumb I the deeps of depression,
Daily in deeper, and find no support, no will, no purpose.
All my old strengths are gone. And yet I shall have to do something.
Ah, the key of our life, that passes all wards, opens all locks,
Is not *I will* but *I must*. I must,—I must,—and I do it.

tion pastoral published in the Highlands, is often excellent, and occasionally fails when you least expect it. There was an odd peculiarity in Mr. Clough's mind; you never could tell whether it was that he would not show himself to the best advantage, or whether he *could* not; it is certain that he very often did not, whether in life or in books. His intellect moved with a great difficulty, and it had a larger inertia than any other which we have ever known. Probably there was an awkwardness born with him, and his shyness and pride prevented him from curing that awkwardness as most men would have done. He felt he might fail, and he knew that he hated to fail. He neglected, therefore, many of the thousand petty trials which fashion and form the accomplished man of the world. Accordingly, when at last he wanted to do something, or was obliged to attempt something, he had occasionally a singular difficulty. He could not get his matter out of him.

In poetry he had a further difficulty, arising from perhaps an over-cultivated taste. He was so good a disciple of Wordsworth, he hated so thoroughly the common sing-song metres of Moore and Byron, that he was apt to try to write what will seem to many persons to have scarcely a metre at all. It is quite true that the metre of intellectual poetry should not be so pretty as that of songs, or so plain and impressive as that of vigorous passion. The rhythm should pervade it and animate it, but should not protrude itself upon the surface, or intrude itself upon the attention. It should be a latent charm, though a real one. Yet, though this doctrine is true, it is nevertheless a dangerous doctrine. Most writers need the strict fetters of familiar metre; as soon as they are emancipated from this, they fancy that *any* words of theirs are metrical. If a man will read any expressive and favourite words of his own often enough, he will come to believe that they are rhythmical; probably they have a rhythm as he reads them; but no notation of pauses and accents could tell the reader how to read them in that manner; and when read in any other mode they may be prose itself. Some of Mr. Clough's early poems, which are placed at the beginning of this volume, are perhaps examples, more or less, of this natural self-delusion. Their

popularity. The public like stories which come to something; Mr. Arnold teaches that a great poem must be founded on a great action, and this one is founded on a long inaction. But Art has many mansions. Many poets, whose cast of thought unfits them for very diffused popularity, have yet a concentrated popularity which suits them and which lasts. Henry Taylor has wisely said "that a poet does not deserve the name who would not rather be read a thousand times by one man, than a single time by a thousand". This repeated perusal, this testing by continual repetition and close contact, is the very test of intellectual poetry; unless such poetry can identify itself with our nature, and dissolve itself into our constant thought, it is nothing, or less than nothing; it is an ineffectual attempt to confer a rare pleasure; it teases by reminding us of that pleasure, and tires by the effort which it demands from us. But if a poem really possesses this capacity of intellectual absorption—if it really is in matter of fact accepted, apprehended, delighted in, and retained by a large number of cultivated and thoughtful minds,—its non-recognition by what is called the public is no more against it than its non-recognition by the coal-heavers. The half-educated and busy crowd, whom we call the public, have no more right to impose their limitations on highly educated and meditative thinkers, than the uneducated and yet more numerous crowd have to impose their still narrower limitations on the half-educated. The coal-heaver will not read any books whatever; the mass of men will not read an intellectual poem: it can hardly ever be otherwise. But timid thinkers must not dread to have a secret and rare faith. But little deep poetry is very popular, and *no* severe art. Such poetry as Mr. Clough's, especially, can never be so; its subjects would forbid it; even if its treatment were perfect: but it may have a better fate; it may have a tenacious hold on the solitary, the meditative, and the calm. It is this which Mr. Clough would have wished; he did not desire to be liked by "inferior people"—at least he would have distrusted any poem of his own which they did like.

The artistic skill of these poems, especially of the poem from which we have extracted so much, and of a long-vaca-

tion pastoral published in the Highlands, is often excellent, and occasionally fails when you least expect it. There was an odd peculiarity in Mr. Clough's mind; you never could tell whether it was that he would not show himself to the best advantage, or whether he *could* not; it is certain that he very often did not, whether in life or in books. His intellect moved with a great difficulty, and it had a larger inertia than any other which we have ever known. Probably there was an awkwardness born with him, and his shyness and pride prevented him from curing that awkwardness as most men would have done. He felt he might fail, and he knew that he hated to fail. He neglected, therefore, many of the thousand petty trials which fashion and form the accomplished man of the world. Accordingly, when at last he wanted to do something, or was obliged to attempt something, he had occasionally a singular difficulty. He could not get his matter out of him.

In poetry he had a further difficulty, arising from perhaps an over-cultivated taste. He was so good a disciple of Wordsworth, he hated so thoroughly the common sing-song metres of Moore and Byron, that he was apt to try to write what will seem to many persons to have scarcely a metre at all. It is quite true that the metre of intellectual poetry should not be so pretty as that of songs, or so plain and impressive as that of vigorous passion. The rhythm should pervade it and animate it, but should not protrude itself upon the surface, or intrude itself upon the attention. It should be a latent charm, though a real one. Yet, though this doctrine is true, it is nevertheless a dangerous doctrine. Most writers need the strict fetters of familiar metre; as soon as they are emancipated from this, they fancy that *any* words of theirs are metrical. If a man will read any expressive and favourite words of his own often enough, he will come to believe that they are rhythmical; probably they have a rhythm as he reads them; but no notation of pauses and accents could tell the reader how to read them in that manner; and when read in any other mode they may be prose itself. Some of Mr. Clough's early poems, which are placed at the beginning of this volume, are perhaps examples, more or less, of this natural self-delusion. Their

popularity. The public like stories which come to something; Mr. Arnold teaches that a great poem must be founded on a great action, and this one is founded on a long inaction. But Art has many mansions. Many poets, whose cast of thought unfits them for very diffused popularity, have yet a concentrated popularity which suits them and which lasts. Henry Taylor has wisely said "that a poet does not deserve the name who would not rather be read a thousand times by one man, than a single time by a thousand". This repeated perusal, this testing by continual repetition and close contact, is the very test of intellectual poetry; unless such poetry can identify itself with our nature, and dissolve itself into our constant thought, it is nothing, or less than nothing; it is an ineffectual attempt to confer a rare pleasure; it teases by reminding us of that pleasure, and tires by the effort which it demands from us. But if a poem really possesses this capacity of intellectual absorption—if it really is in matter of fact accepted, apprehended, delighted in, and retained by a large number of cultivated and thoughtful minds,—its non-recognition by what is called the public is no more against it than its non-recognition by the coal-heavers. The half-educated and busy crowd, whom we call the public, have no more right to impose their limitations on highly educated and meditative thinkers, than the uneducated and yet more numerous crowd have to impose their still narrower limitations on the half-educated. The coal-heaver will not read any books whatever; the mass of men will not read an intellectual poem: it can hardly ever be otherwise. But timid thinkers must not dread to have a secret and rare faith. But little deep poetry is very popular, and no severe art. Such poetry as Mr. Clough's, especially, can never be so; its subjects would forbid it; even if its treatment were perfect: but it may have a better fate; it may have a hold on the solitary, the meditative, and the calm. Mr. Clough would have wished; he did not like by "inferior people"—at least he would [illegible] poem of his own which they did like. [illegible] these poems, especially of the poem [illegible] much, and of a long-vaca-

tion pastoral published in the Highlands, is often excellent, and occasionally fails when you least expect it. There was an odd peculiarity in Mr. Clough's mind; you never could tell whether it was that he would not show himself to the best advantage, or whether he *could* not; it is certain that he very often did not, whether in life or in books. His intellect moved with a great difficulty, and it had a larger inertia than any other which we have ever known. Probably there was an awkwardness born with him, and his shyness and pride prevented him from curing that awkwardness as most men would have done. He felt he might fail, and he knew that he hated to fail. He neglected, therefore, many of the thousand petty trials which fashion and form the accomplished man of the world. Accordingly, when at last he wanted to do something, or was obliged to attempt something, he had occasionally a singular difficulty. He could not get his matter out of him.

In poetry he had a further difficulty, arising from perhaps an over-cultivated taste. He was so good a disciple of Wordsworth, he hated so thoroughly the common sing-song metres of Moore and Byron, that he was apt to try to write what will seem to many persons to have scarcely a metre at all. It is quite true that the metre of intellectual poetry should not be so pretty as that of songs, or so plain and impressive as that of vigorous passion. The rhythm should pervade it and animate it, but should not protrude itself upon the surface, or intrude itself upon the attention. It should be a latent charm, though a real one. Yet, though this doctrine is true, it is nevertheless a dangerous doctrine. Most writers need the strict fetters of familiar metre; as soon as they are emancipated from this, they fancy that *any* words of theirs are metrical. If a man will read any expressive and favourite words of his own often enough, he will come to believe that they are rhythmical; probably they have a rhythm as he reads them; but no notation of pauses and accents could tell the reader how to read them in that manner; and when read in any other mode they may be prose itself. Some of Mr. Clough's early poems, which are placed at the beginning of this volume, are perhaps examples, more or less, of this natural self-delusion. Their

remarks are sensible, and he has the great merit of not being imposed on by great names and traditional reputations. The defect of the book is, that he takes too literary a view of politics and politicians; that he has not looked closely and for himself at real political life; that he therefore misses the guiding traits which show what in Queen Anne's time was so like our present politics, and what so wholly unlike. We shall venture in the course of this article to supply some general outline of the controversies that were to be then decided, and of the political forces which decided them; for unless these are distinctly imagined, a reader of the present day cannot comprehend why such a man as Bolingbroke was at one moment the most conspicuous and influential of English statesmen, and then for years an exile and a wanderer.

We must own, however, that it is not the intrinsic interest even of events once so very important as the war of the Grand Alliance and the Peace of Utrecht which tempts us to write this article. It is the interest of Bolingbroke's own character. He tried a great experiment. There lurks about the fancies of many men and women an imaginary conception of an ideal statesman, resembling the character of which Alcibiades has been the recognised type for centuries. There is a sort of intellectual luxury in the idea which fascinates the human mind. We like to fancy a young man, in the first vigour of body and in the first vigour of mind, who is full of bounding enjoyment, who is fond of irregular luxury, who is the favourite of society, who excels all rivals at masculine feats, who gains the love of women by a magic attraction; but who is also a powerful statesman, who regulates great events, who settles great measures, who guides a great nation. We seem to outstep the *mœnia mundi*, the recognised limits of human nature, when we conceive a man in the pride of youth to have dominion over the pursuits of age, to rule both the light things of women and the grave things of men. Human imagination so much loves to surpass human power, that we shall never be able to extirpate the conception. But we may examine the approximations to it in life. We see in Bolingbroke's case that a life of brilliant license is really compatible with a life of brilliant states-

manship; that license itself may even be thought to quicken the imagination for oratorical efforts; that an intellect similarly aroused may, at exciting conjectures, perceive possibilities which are hidden from duller men; that the favourite of society will be able to use his companionship with men and his power over women so as much to aid his strokes of policy; but, on the other hand, that these secondary aids and occasional advantages are purchased by the total sacrifice of a primary necessity; that a life of great excitement is incompatible with the calm circumspection and the sound estimate of probability essential to great affairs; that though the excited hero may perceive distant things which others overlook, he will overlook near things that others see; that though he may be stimulated to great speeches which others could not make, he will also be irritated to petty speeches which others would not; that he will attract enmities, but not confidence; that he will not observe how few and plain are the alternatives of common business, and how little even genius can enlarge them; that his prosperity will be a wild dream of unattainable possibilities, and his adversity a long regret that those possibilities have departed. At any rate, such was Bolingbroke's career. We have better evidence about him than about any similar statesman, for the events in which he was concerned were large, and he has given us a narrative of them from his own hand. A summary retrospect of his career will not be worthless, if it show what sudden brilliancy and what incurable ruin such a life as his, with such a genius as his, was calculated to ensure.

Bolingbroke's father was a type of his generation. He was a rake of the Restoration. Charles II. is the only king of England who had both the social qualities which fitted him to be the head of society, and the immoral qualities which fitted him to corrupt society. His easy talk, his good anecdotes, his happy manners, his conversancy with various life, made Whitehall the "best club" of that time. What sort of life he encouraged men to lead there we all know. Bolingbroke's father learned of him all the evil which he could learn. It was not singular that he committed excesses of dissipation, but it was rather singular that he committed what was thought

to be a murder. He stabbed a man in a drunken broil, and, if Burnet can be trusted, only escaped from the gallows by a great bribe. He dawdled on at the coffee-houses far into George II.'s time, a monument of extinct profligacy, and a spectacle and a wonder to a graver generation.

Bolingbroke's mother was a daughter of the Earl of Warwick; but she died early, and his father married again, so that we hear very little about her. If the silence of his biographers may be trusted as evidence, she exercised but little influence upon his infancy or upon his life.

The most influential preceptors of Bolingbroke's boyhood were his grandfather and grandmother, who also were not unusual characters in their generation. The former was a serious and moderate Royalist, the latter was a serious but moderate Puritan. Bolingbroke's father apparently did not much like keeping house: it must have interfered with his pleasures, and marred the life of coffee-houses. The whole direction of Bolingbroke's mind was given to his grave grandfather and grandmother. In after-times, when he was a prominent Tory and a professed High-Churchman, satirists used to say that he was brought up among "Dissenters". And it is probable that his grandmother, who was the daughter of the celebrated Oliver St. John, the great parliamentary lawyer and chief justice, was far from being in opinion what a high Anglican divine would term a "Churchwoman". Bolingbroke himself used to relate terrible stories of having been compelled to read the sermons of Puritan divines. But, as far as our slight information goes, he did not suffer more than in any moderately "serious" family of our own time. All serious families were then thought to have a little taint of Dissent, and Bolingbroke was probably very sensitive to the partial dulness of a semi-puritanical religion.

At any rate, we have no doubt it was said (and that his elder relatives much grieved at it) that "the boy was gone wrong, like his father". When he came out into the world he astonished his associates by his license. He had been at Eton and Oxford; but he had not learned, what is often learned there, a decorum in profligacy. To what precise enormities

his license extended is immaterial, and cannot now be known. Goldsmith had talked to an old gentleman who related that Bolingbroke and his companions, in a drunken frolic, ran "naked through the park". But this is hardly credible; and probably Goldsmith's informant was one of the many old people who believe that the more wonderful the stories they tell, the more wonderful they themselves become. But at any rate his outrages attracted censure. He did not, like his father, belong to his generation. The age of King William tolerated much that we tolerate no longer, but it was not like the first years of Charles II. There was no longer a headlong recoil from Puritan strictness, and the Crown was on the side of at least apparent morality. As is usual in England, grave decorum and obvious morals had a substantial influence, and against these Bolingbroke offended.

He wrote poetry too, and the sort of poetry can only be appreciated by reading Locke's celebrated warning against that art, and the connections which it occasions. Bolingbroke's verses are addressed to a Clara A., an orange-girl, who pretended to sell that fruit near the Court of Requests, but who really had other objects. She was a lady of what may be called mutable connections; and the object of Bolingbroke's verses is to induce her to give them up and adhere to him only. He says:—

> "No, Clara, no; that person and that mind
> Were formed by Nature, and by Heaven designed
> For nobler ends: to these return, though late;
> Return to these, and so avert thy fate.
> Think, Clara, think; nor will that thought be vain;
> Thy slave, thy Harry, doom'd to drag his chain
> Of love ill-treated and abused, that he
> From more inglorious chains might rescue thee:
> Thy drooping health restored by his fond care,
> Once more thy beauty its full lustre wear;
> Moved by his love, by his example taught,
> Soon shall thy soul, once more with virtue fraught,
> With kind and generous truth thy bosom warm,
> And thy fair mind, like thy fair person, charm,
> To virtue thus and to thyself restored,
> By all admired, by one alone adored,
> Be to thy Harry ever kind and true,
> And live for him who more than dies for you."

One would like to know what the orange-girl thought of all this; but it would seem he was lavish of money as well as of verses.

At twenty-two he married. We do not know much about his money matters; and, as his father and grandfather were both alive, his means could not have been at all large, especially as his expenses had been great. But his wife had certainly a considerable fortune. She was descended from a clothier called Jack of Newbury, who had made a fortune several generations before, and was one of the co-heiresses of Sir Henry Winchescomb, who had large property. What sort of person she was does not very clearly appear. But it does appear that the match was an unhappy one. He said she had a bad temper, with what truth we cannot ascertain now; and she said he was a bad husband, which was unquestionably true. He had been a rake before marriage, and did not cease afterwards. He could drink more wine than any one in London, and continued that habit too. A kind of connection was kept up between them for many years, but it was a dubious and unhappy connection. We may suppose, however, that when he was a great statesman she derived some glory, if little happiness, from him; and he certainly received a large income from her property during very many years.

At the age of twenty-eight Bolingbroke entered the House of Commons. Before that time he had done nothing to prove himself a man of great ability. At school and college he had done well, and had laid up perhaps a greater store of classical knowledge than those around him knew of. When abroad for a year or so, he had learned to speak French unusually well and unusually easily. But since he had been of age and in the world, his vices had been great, and he had not done much to compensate for them. Probably his boon companions considered him very clever; but then sober men rated very low the judgment of those companions. His skill in writing poetry had not been greater than most people's, and his choice of subjects had been worse. Until now he had had no opportunity of showing great talents, and much opportunity of showing considerable vices.

In the House of Commons it was otherwise. His handsome person, long descent, and aristocratic mien set off a very remarkable eloquence, which seems to have been very ready even at the first. Years afterwards he was the model to whom Lord Chesterfield pointed in all the arts of manner and expression. "Lord Bolingbroke," he tells us, "without the least trouble, talked all day long full as elegantly as he wrote. He adorned whatever subject he either spoke or wrote upon by the most splendid eloquence; not a studied and laboured eloquence, but by such a flowing happiness of diction which (from care perhaps at first) was become so habitual to him, that even his most familiar conversations, if taken down in writing, would have borne the press without the least correction either as to method or style." "He had the most elegant politeness and good-breeding which ever any courtier or man of the world was blessed with."

Nor did he neglect matter in the pursuit of manner. In later life he wrote some characters of the two great orators of antiquity, which showed how acutely he had studied them. He turned aside from the commonplace topics, from their language and their manner, to comment on their acquaintance with all the topics of their time, and on the practical questions. No one can read those delineations without perceiving that the writer is speaking of an art which he has himself practised. Those who knew how little studious Bolingbroke's habits were, appear to have been surprised at the information he displayed. But his excitable life rather promoted than forbade brief crises of keen study. His parts were quick, his language vague, though imposing, and he could always talk very happily on subjects of which he only knew a very little.

The time was favourable to a great orator. The Tory party was exactly in the state in which it has been in our own time. It had many votes and no tongue. Our county system tends to prevent our county magnates from ruling England. Stringent limitations are laid down which narrow the electoral choice, and tend to exclude available talent. It is wise and natural that the landed interest should choose to be represented by landed gentlemen; a community

of nature between it and its representatives is desirable and inevitable. But our counties are more exacting than this: each county requires that the member shall have land within the county, and as in each the number of candidates thus limited is but small, unsuitable ones must be chosen. We have left off expecting eloquence from a county member. Grave files of speechless men have always represented the land of England. In Queen Anne's time too, as in our own time, a lingering prejudice haunted rural minds, and inclined them to prefer stupid magnates who shared it to clever ones who were emancipated from it. Bolingbroke, like Mr. Disraeli, found the Tory party in a state of dumb power; like him, too, he became its spokesman and obtained its power.

Bolingbroke came into Parliament just at the end of King William's reign, and was at once forced into contact with the two subjects which were to occupy almost exclusively his active life. The reign of King William, which was about to end, and that of Queen Anne, which was just about to begin, were filled by two of the greatest topics which can occupy a period. The first of these was a question of dynasty. Our revolution has been called the "minimum of a revolution," [1] and in the eyes of a political philosopher so it is. It altered but little in the substance of our institutions and in our positive law. But to common people, when it happened, the change was great. Even now the detail of our parliamentary system is not much understood by the poorer part of the public, and they care for it but little; the Queen and her family, and the Prince of Wales and the Princess Alexandra, mainly interest them. The person of the sovereign embodies to them constitution, law, power. But our revolution changed the sovereign. The only political name and idea known to rural hamlets were taken away, and another name and idea were substituted in their stead. Jacobites went about saying that there was one king whom God had made, and another king whom Parliament had made. At this moment, though the dogma of hereditary right has been confuted for ages, though it has been laughed at for ages, though Parliaments have condemned it, though divines

[1] Sir G. C. Lewis.

have been impeached for preaching it, though it is a misdemeanour to maintain it, the tenet still lives in ordinary minds. In Somersetshire and half the quiet counties the inhabitants would say that Queen Victoria ruled by the right of birth and the grace of God, and not by virtue of an Act of Parliament. They still think that she has a divine right to the crown, and not a right by statute only. If the old creed of the Jacobites is still so powerful, what must have been its force in Queen Anne's time? That generation had seen the change from "God's king" to "man's king," and very many of them did not like it. Shrewd men said that England was prosperous under the revolutionary government; common sense said that an ill-born king who governed well was better than a well-born king who governed ill; Whigs said that England was free after the revolution, and would have been enslaved but for the revolution; yet on the simple superstition of many natural minds the force of these arguments was lost. They admitted the advantage of liberty and of prosperity, but they would not renounce "the Lord's anointed for a mess of pottage". Happily this political feeling was counteracted by a religious feeling. The hatred to Popery supported the successful and rebellious king, who was a Protestant, against the unsuccessful and legitimate king, who was a Papist. But the strength so obtained was precarious; it might cease at any time. The "Pretender" might change his religion, and reports were continually circulated that he had done so, or was to do so. The existing dynasty could not be strong when its best support in the most natural minds was the continued profession of one religion by a person who had very strong motives to profess another.

The question of dynasty was the prominent question in Bolingbroke's age; such a question must always be the first where it exists. The question, who shall be king, can never be secondary. But it had a formidable rival. All through King William's and all through Queen Anne's time, the English mind was occupied with almost the only question which could compete with the question who should be King of England—the question whether there ought or ought not to be war with France. Frequent battles, daily hopes of battles, daily argu-

ments whether there should be battles or not, kept even the greatest domestic question out of our thoughts.

On both these subjects Bolingbroke was compelled to critical action in his first Parliament. The question of dynasty was in a very odd and very English state of complexity. It might have been thought to be a question of bare alternatives, and to have been susceptible of no compromise. *Either* Parliament had no power to choose a sovereign upon grounds of expediency, or it might choose any sovereign who was expedient. If King James might be expelled at all, it could only be because he was a bad king, and in order to put in a better king. On principle, Parliament was either powerless or omnipotent. But this clear decisive logic has never suited Englishmen. As for King William, indeed, no one could say he was any sort of king except a parliamentary king, but his heir was the Princess Anne. "Surely, it was thought, she and her children had *some* divine right—a little, if not much? She had no right by birth certainly, for her father and her brother came before her; she was not the nearest heir, but she was the nearest Protestant heir; she was not the eldest son of the last king, but she was his eldest daughter that was living." These facts do not seem to be very material to us now, but at the time they were critically material. Half the population probably believed that it would be right—not merely expedient, but right in some high mystic sense—to obey Anne and her children. They were not only ready, but were anxious, to take her for the root of a new dynasty. But the Fates seemed capriciously determined to defeat their wishes. Anne had thirteen children, and all the thirteen died. At the death of the Duke of Gloucester, who was the last of them, some further settlement was necessary, and what it should be was decided in Bolingbroke's first Parliament.

On this subject he ought to have been a Whig of the Whigs. His writings are full of such expressions as the "chimera of prerogative"; "the slavish principles of passive obedience and non-resistance which had skulked" in old books till the reign of James I. And he has stated the Whig conception of the revolution as well as any one, if not better. "If," he says, "a

divine, indefeasible, hereditary right to govern a community be once acknowledged; a right independent of the community, and which vests in every successive prince immediately on the death of his predecessor, and previously to any engagement taken on his part towards the people; if the people once acknowledge themselves bound to such princes by the ties of passive obedience and non-resistance, by an allegiance unconditional, and not reciprocal to protection; if a kind of oral law, or mysterious cabbala, which pharisees of the black gown and the long robe are always at hand to report and interpret as a prince desires, be once added, like a supplemental code, to the known laws of the land: then, I say, such princes have the power, if not the right, given them of commencing tyrants; and princes who have the power, are prone to think that they have the right. Such was the state of king and people before the revolution." He could have no horror of Popery, for he regarded all the historical forms of Christianity with an impartial scepticism; he probably thought it more gentlemanly than Presbyterianism, and not more absurd than Anglicanism. He ought to have been ready to obey whatever king was most eligible upon grounds of rational expediency.

The proposal of the Whigs, too, was as moderate as it was possible for it to be. As public opinion required, they selected the next Protestant heir. They passed over all the children of James II., who were Catholics, the descendants of Henrietta, daughter of Charles I., who were Catholics, the elder descendants of Elizabeth, the daughter of James I., who were Catholics, and found the Princess Sophia, a younger daughter of Elizabeth, who was a very clever and accomplished lady, and who, if she had any religion, was a Protestant. All the reasonable and prudent part of the nation was in favour of this scheme. The Whigs were of course in favour of it, for it was their scheme. Harley, at the head of the moderate Tories, strenuously supported it. But it was not popular with the unthinking masses, and perhaps could not be. Half or more than half the believers in divine right were ready, as we have explained, to pay obedience to Queen Anne as a sort of consecrated queen; she was at any rate a princess born of a real

king and queen in real England; we had always been used to her. But a search in Germany for the sort of Protestants we were likely to find there was not pleasant to the mass of Englishmen; and of the strong-minded old lady who had been discovered nothing whatever was commonly known. After all, too, there was no certainty that in future we should be obeying the nearest Protestant heir. We were passing over several Catholic families; and if hereafter any one of them were to become a Protestant—according to *principle*, or what was called such, we must obey him as our king.

Though the choice of the Hanoverian family as heirs to the Crown was prudent, wise, and statesmanlike, there was no strong popular sentiment on which it was firmly based, and no neat popular phrase by which it could in argument be precisely supported. In a word, unthinking people of the common sort did not much like the House of Hanover, and a mass of ill-defined prejudice accumulated against it. Of this prejudice Bolingbroke made himself the organ. He did not share it or try to share it. But, finding a large and speechless party, he thought he could become at once politically important by saying for them that which they could not say for themselves. The scheme was successful. He became at once important in Parliament, because he was the eloquent spokesman of many inaudible persons.

In foreign policy, Bolingbroke's tactics were the same. The aggression of France was the natural terror of lovers of liberty at that time. Louis XIV. was as ready to use his power without scruple against free nations as Napoleon; and his power, though not equal to that of Napoleon at his zenith, was greater than that of Napoleon at most times, and than that of any other French sovereign at any time. The King of Spain, too, was about to die; it was to be feared that he would name as his heir Philip, the grandson of Louis; and few doubted but that Louis, notwithstanding an express renunciation of all such claims by treaty, would permit his grandson to accept the throne. Nor was the Spain of 1700 merely the Spain of our time. She was much more powerful. She possessed the "California of that age, a vast empire in South America, pro-

ducing gold and silver, which were then thought to be magically potent substances, for the whole civilised world. She possessed, too, Sicily, and Naples, and Milan, and Belgium; and the popular imagination, which ever clings to decaying grandeur, still believed that Spain itself was a nation of great power—was still able, as in former generations, to obtain ascendency in Europe. The *terror*, for such it was, of liberal politicians then was, that that vast inheritance would practically fall into the dominion of Louis XIV.—that it would belong to a Bourbon prince brought up under his eye, and slavishly in subjection to him. The Whigs contended that this calamity should be prevented, if possible, by an amicable partition of Spain, by giving France as little as possible, and that little in places as little important as possible. If no such amicable arrangement were possible, they said, it must be prevented by a war. The Tories did not like war, did not like partition treaties. They did not love France, but they were not anxious to oppose France. In that age we were uneducated in foreign policy; the mass of men had no distinct conception of continental transactions, nor was reason reinforced very distinctly by antipathy. We hated France, it is true, but we hated Holland also; she was our rival in commerce and our enemy—sometimes our successful enemy—in naval warfare; and to vanquish the French by the aid of the Dutch did not greatly gratify our animosity. The anti-revolutionary part of the nation did not care for liberty, for that was the code of the Whigs and the basis of the revolution. In a word, though there was little distinct or rational opinion opposed to a war with France, there was much indistinct and crude prejudice. Of this too Bolingbroke became the organ.

In the later part of his life he did not attempt to defend his first notion of foreign policy. He says: "I have sometimes considered, in reflecting on these passages, what I should have done if I had sat in Parliament at that time; and have been forced to own myself that I should have voted for disbanding the army then, as I voted in the following Parliament for censuring the partition treaties. I am forced to own this, because I remember how imperfect my notions were of the

situation of Europe in that extraordinary crisis, and how much I saw the true interest of my own country in a half light. But, my lords, I own it with some shame, because in truth nothing could be more absurd than the conduct we held. What! because we had not reduced the power of France by the war, nor excluded the house of Bourbon from the Spanish succession, nor compounded with her upon it by the peace; and because the House of Austria had not helped herself, nor put it into our power to help her with more advantage and better prospect of success—were we to leave that whole succession open to the invasions of France, and to suffer even the contingency to subsist of seeing those monarchies united? What! because it was become extravagant, after the trials so lately made, to think ourselves any longer engaged by treaty, or obliged by good policy, to put the House of Austria in possession of the whole Spanish monarchy, and to defend her in this possession by force of arms, were we to leave the whole at the mercy of France? If we were not to do so, if we were not to do one of the three things that I said above remained to be done, and if the Emperor put it out of our power to do another of them with advantage; were we to put it still more out of our power, and to wait unarmed for the death of the King of Spain? In fine, if we had not the prospect of disputing with France, so successfully as we might have had it, the Spanish succession whenever it should be open; were we not only to show, by disarming, that we would not dispute it at all, but to censure likewise the second of the three things mentioned above, and which King William put in practice, the compounding with France, to prevent if possible a war, in which we were averse to engage?" The truth doubtless is, that Bolingbroke never believed, or much believed these absurdities. As he was the spokesman of the Tories, he advocated, and was compelled to advocate, the vague notions which they not unnaturally held, and these were prejudices imbibed by habit, not opinions elaborated by effort.

That his mode of advocacy was very skilful, we may easily believe. His speeches have perished, but their merit may be conjectured. He is in his writings a great master of *specious*

statement. Accessory arguments and subordinate facts seem of themselves to fall precisely where they should fall. He has the knack of never *making* a case; the case always seems made for him; he seems to be giving it its most suitable expression, but to be doing no more. In the greater part of his writings which were written late in life, except when he defends the Peace of Utrecht, he had no tenet to defend in which he took a keen interest. He had not the habits suitable to abstract thought, nor the genius for it. He is apt, therefore, to embody meagre thoughts in excellent words, to develop long arguments from sparse facts. He had a pleasure in writing, and he had little to say. But when his passions were eager, when his interest was vivid, when the very dissipation of his life quickened his excitability, when the topic of discussion was critically important to himself—we may well believe his advocacy to have been effective. He could ever say what he pleased, and in early life he had much to say which he well knew and for which he much cared.

A blunder of Louis' for several years simplified English politics. At the death of James II. he acknowledged his son, the "Pretender," as King of England; and he could have done him no greater harm. The English people were not very sure of abstract rights, but they were very sure of practical applications. Whether they had a right to choose a king for themselves might be doubtful, but it was clear that the King of France had no such right. Whoever might be our king, it certainly should not be his *protégé*. War with France became popular. The King of Spain was dead; as was feared, he had left the vast inheritance of Spain to Louis' grandson, and war with France became expedient. It was declared accordingly.

The death of William simplified politics still further. Bolingbroke himself may explain this. "The alliances," he tell us, "were concluded, the quotas were settled, and the season for taking the field approached, when King William died. The event could not fail to occasion some consternation on one side, and to give some hopes on the other; for, notwithstanding the ill success with which he made war generally, he was looked upon as the sole centre of union that could keep together the

great confederacy then forming; and how much the French feared from his life had appeared a few years before, in the extravagant and indecent joy they expressed on a false report of his death. A short time showed how vain the fears of some, and the hopes of others, were. By his death, the Duke of Marlborough was raised to the head of the army, and indeed of the confederacy; where he, a new, a private man, a subject, acquired by merit and by management a more deciding influence than high birth, confirmed authority, and even the crown of Great Britain, had given to King William. Not only all the parts of that vast machine, the grand alliance, were kept more compact and entire, but a more rapid and vigorous motion was given to the whole; and, instead of languishing or disastrous campaigns, we saw every scene of the war full of action. All those wherein he appeared, and many of those wherein he was not then an actor—but abettor, however, of their action—were crowned with the most triumphant success. I take with pleasure this opportunity of doing justice to that great man, whose faults I knew, whose virtues I admired, and whose memory, as the greatest general and as the greatest minister that our country or perhaps any other has produced, I honour." The war absorbed England for several years. For the first time in our history we were the centre of a great confederacy, and our general was the victorious leader, in great battles, of miscellaneous armies. It was then that we first acquired that great name as a military people, which, notwithstanding our small numbers and small armies, we have since supported, and that a great foresight, a minute diligence, and a splendid courage in modern war, were first combined in an Englishman. Marlborough was in one respect more fortunate than Wellington. Napoleon must always be the first military figure of his generation; but throughout the last century the whole Continent talked of the wars of Marlborough, for he was the most fascinating as well as the most successful general in them.

During the first eight years of Marlborough's wars, the English nation was nearly united. A war always unites a people; the objector to it becomes a kind of traitor to his country; he seems to be a favourer of the enemy, even though he is not.

Not only Harley, a moderate Tory, but Bolingbroke, an extreme Tory, took office in the war ministry. It is true there was no dereliction of party principle in their doing so, either as such principle was then understood, or as it is understood now. Marlborough himself had never been a Whig; and Godolphin, the head of the Treasury and first minister for the home administration, had ever been a Tory. But though plain party ties might not be violated by a Tory support of Marlborough's wars, a sort of sentiment was violated. The war was a Whig war, and could only be carried on by Whig support. Ere long Godolphin and Marlborough were compelled to give the Whigs a large share in the actual administration. The ministry became a composite one. Though many Tories remained in it, yet its essence and its spirit were Whig. It was carrying on the sort of war which one party in the State had extolled for years, and which the antagonist party had deprecated for years. It has been called after its cause. It has been called the Whig Ministry of Godolphin and Marlborough, the two leading Tories of the age.

The place which Bolingbroke accepted was that of Secretary at War, which brought him into contact with the best business of the time, with that sort of business upon which most depended. As far as appears, he did it well, and the official experience he then acquired must have been inestimable to him afterwards. There is much which no statesman can in truth know, and much more which he will not be thought to know, unless he has gone through a certain necessary official education, and learned to use certain conventional official expressions. This sort of knowledge Bolingbroke now acquired. But it was not by success or failure in office desk-work that the movements of his life were to be regulated.

The Whigs naturally did not quite like the subordinate position which they occupied in a ministry which was carrying out a Whig policy. They thought it hard that Tories should be paid for Whig measures; that the glory of delivering Europe should be given, not to Whigs, who had striven to deliver her, but to Tories, who would have liked not to deliver her. Their support was necessary to Godolphin and to Marlborough, and

they gradually raised the price of that support. Early in 1708 most of the remaining Tories were turned out, and Bolingbroke among them. Except the two chiefs, Godolphin and Marlborough, the ministry became a Whig ministry almost exclusively.

That Bolingbroke did not like to be turned out is probable; but he professed to like it. He sought refuge in retirement; he professed to study philosophy, and passed much of his time in the country, and in reading. Such professions from a man of great ambition and lax life were ridiculed. A friend suggested that he should write this motto over his favourite rural retreat:—

> "From business and the noisy world retired,
> Nor vexed by love, nor by ambition fired,
> Gently I wait the call of Charon's boat,
> Still drinking like a fish, and amorous like a goat." [1]

And Swift says he could hardly bear the jest, for he was a man rather sensitive to ridicule. And though satirists might laugh at his meditations and his studies, and though he permitted them to derange very little his pleasure or his vices, there is no doubt but that they were real, and that they were valuable. Doubtless, too, though he was only twenty-eight, he was a little tired of subordinate office. His disposition was very impatient, and his sense of personal dignity very considerable. Even so patient a pattern of routine diligence as Sir Robert Peel rejoiced as a young man to be for a year or so out of office. His mind, he acknowledged, widened, and his capacity to think for himself improved. If Peel, who was made to toil in the furrow, felt this, Bolingbroke, who was made to exult in the desert, might well feel it. During three years he really read much and thought much.

But a great change was at hand. The war with France was still successful and still popular, but it might be doubted if it was still necessary. We had weakened France so much, that it might be questionable if she wanted weakening more. Our victories had destroyed her prestige, and the results of these

[1] Swift's *Journal to Stella.*

victories had weakened her vigour. Sensible men began to inquire what was to be the time, what the occasion, and what the terms of peace.

The ministry, indeed, appeared to be firm, but it was firm in appearance only. The conditions of ministerial continuance differed in that age in a most material respect from the present conditions. Now, the House of Commons, in almost all cases, prescribes imperatively not only what measures shall be taken, but what men shall take them: it chooses both policy and ministers. In Queen Anne's time Parliament had acquired an almost complete ascendency in policy; it could fix precisely whether there should be war or no war, peace or no peace; it had acquired a perfect control upon legislation, and a nearly perfect control upon internal administration. But it had no choice, or but little in the selection of persons. *What* was to be done Parliament settled, but *who* was to do it the queen settled.

Queen Anne had done so at her accession. Though she was engaged in a Whig war, she removed the Whig ministers whom she found in office. She appointed as supreme generalissimo over the war abroad, and real prime minister over matters of state at home, the Duke of Marlborough, not because of his discretion or his acquaintance with business, or his military genius, but because his wife was her early friend and her special favourite. As the Duke of Wellington justly observed, the Duke of Marlborough *was* the English Government; he was not liable to be thwarted, or misconstrued, or neglected; his operations in Flanders were never cramped by the home Government, as the operations of the Duke of Wellington in Spain were cramped. He appointed the lord high treasurer Godolphin; he placed the Treasury, then even more than now the supreme internal office, in Godolphin's hands, because he was connected with him by domestic ties, because they had long acted together, because he had great confidence in his financial ability. The Duke of Marlborough was not only great because of his wife, but absolutely because of his wife.

By a kind of compensation the source of his power was the cause also of his downfall. The Queen and the duchess quarrelled, as was natural. The duchess was virulent and

obtrusive, and the Queen was sensitive and sullen. The Queen had a strong sense of personal dignity, which the duchess used to outrage. The duchess, who was clever, thought the Queen a fool, and scarcely forbore to look and say so. From early habit the friendship lasted much longer than could have been thought likely, but it could not last for ever. As it was breaking up, a small force produced a large effect. The Queen, Swift says, had not a "stock of amity" for more than one person at a time: she commonly cared but little for anybody save one; but she required one. The duchess had placed at court a poor relative of her own, a Miss Hill, whom both she and the Queen regarded as a petty dependent, a *real* maid, who would be useful and lie on the floor when peeresses and young ladies of quality were useless and went to bed. As she was humble and artful, she acquired influence; she was never in the way and never out of the way. She was always pleasant to the Queen, and the duchess was commonly unpleasant. The consequence was certain. The abject new favourite soon supplanted the querulous old favourite.

A very curious man took advantage of this. Wits and satirists have been fond of describing Robert Harley, but perhaps they have not described him very well. They have made a heap of incongruities of him. They have told us that, being bred a Puritan, and retaining till his death much of the Puritan phraseology, he yet became the favourite leader of High Churchmen and Tories; that being a muddle-headed dawdler, he gained a great reputation for the transaction of business; that having an incapacity for intelligible speech, he became an influential orator in Parliament; that being a puzzle-headed man, of less than average ability, and less than average activity, he long ruled a great party, for years ruled the court, and was at last Prime Minister of England.

It is very natural that brilliant and vehement men should depreciate Harley, for he had nothing which they possess, but had everything which they commonly do not possess. He was by nature a moderate man. In that age they called such a man a trimmer, but they called him ill. Such a man does not consciously shift or purposely trim his course. He firmly

believes that he is substantially consistent. "I do not wish in this House," he would say in our age, "to be a party to any extreme course. Mr. Gladstone brings forward a great many things which I cannot understand; I assure you he does. There is more in that bill of his about tobacco than he thinks; I am confident there is. Money is a serious thing, a *very* serious thing. And I am sorry to say Mr. Disraeli commits the party very much. He avows sentiments which are injudicious. I cannot go along with him nor can Sir John. He was not taught the Catechism; I know he was not. There is a want in him of sound and sober religion—and Sir John agrees with me—which would keep him from distressing the clergy, who are very important. Great orators are very well; but, as I said, how is the revenue? And the point is, not to be led away and to be moderate, and not to go to an extreme. As soon as it seems *very* clear, then I begin to doubt. I have been many years in Parliament, and *that* is my experience." We may laugh at such speeches, but there have been plenty of them in every English Parliament. A great English divine has been described as always leaving out the principle upon which his arguments rested; even if it was stated to him, he regarded it as far-fetched and extravagant. Any politician who has this temper of mind will always have many followers; and he may be nearly sure that all great measures will be passed more nearly as he wishes them to be passed than as great orators wish. Harley had this temper, and he enjoyed its results. He always had a certain influence over moderate Whigs when he was a Tory, and over moderate Tories when he was a Whig. Nine-tenths of mankind are more afraid of violence than of anything else; and inconsistent moderation is always popular, because of all qualities it is most opposite to violence—most likely to preserve the present safe existence.

Harley's moderation, which was influential because it was unaffected, was assisted by two powers which brilliant people despise, because in general they do not share them. Harley excelled in the forms of business. There is distinct evidence that official persons preferred his management of the Treasury to that of Lord Godolphin, who preceded him, or Sir R.

Walpole, who succeeded him. In real judgment and substantial knowledge of affairs, there was doubtless no comparison. Godolphin was the best financier of his generation; and Walpole was the best not only of his own but of many which came after him. But the ultimate issue of business is not the part of it which most impresses the officials of a department. They understand how business is conducted better than what comes of it. The statesman who gives them no trouble—who coincides with that which they recommend—who thinks of the things which they think of, is more satisfactory to his mere subordinates than a real ruler, who has plans which others do not share, and whose mind is occupied by large considerations, which only a few can appreciate, and only experience can test. In his own time, both with the Tory party and with moderate Whigs, Harley's reputation as a man of business was a means of influence which, on the same scene and in our own day, could hardly be surpassed.

But it was surpassed in his own day. In personal questions, as we have explained, the Parliament in Queen Anne's time was only a subordinate power; the court was the principal and the determining power. Now the faculty of business is but secondary in all courts; the faculty of intrigue is the main source of real influence. To be able to manage men, to know with whom to be silent, to know with whom to say how much, to be able to drop casual observations, to have a sense of that which others mean, though they do not say—to be aware what Lady A. is in secret planning, though she says the very opposite—to know that Lord B. has no influence, though he seems most potent—to know that little C. is a wire-puller, and can get you anything, though he looks mean and though no one knows; in a word, to understand, to feel, to be unable to help feeling, the *by-play* of life, is the principal necessity for success in courts. It is the instinct of management which is not to be shown even in conversation, far less in writing or speculation, but yet which rules all small societies. Harley possessed it, and the obscure but potent talents of business also; and we need seek no farther explanation why he was one of the most successful men in his own time.

Harley was some sort of relative to Miss Hill (or Mrs. Masham, for she married), the rising favourite of Queen Anne's time. He was the favourite leader of all moderate Tories; and, on the whole, though not without grumblings from extreme men, the most important leader of the Tory party. He had been turned out when Bolingbroke was turned out, and he wished to return. The fly was brought to the spider. Mrs. Masham, the new favourite, asked Harley what counsel she should give the Queen. He said, "Turn out the Whigs"; and meant "Bring *me* in".

The Queen was inert, for that was her nature; and the evident popularity and the glorious success of the Whig war naturally staggered her. But the Whigs made an error. The High-Church and semi-High-Church party had enormous power in the nation; they had always advocated non-resistance before the revolution, and though they had taken the oaths to King William's Government, they did not like to think that they were supporting a Government which was conspicuously rebellious, which began in resistance to legitimate authority. Of course, the fact was so. King William invaded England with Dutch troops, and was joined by English rebels; but the divine right of princes, and the duty of unconditional obedience, retained much influence over most of the clergy and over many of the laity. If the Whigs had been wise, they would have offended this powerful sentiment as little as possible. High Churchmen were certainly powerful, but were necessarily inert; they had no distinct course to recommend; they *would* have done much, but they *could* do nothing. They had assented to the existing Government, and though their assent might be unwilling and ungracious, the existing Government should have let them alone. The Whigs adopted the reverse course. A foolish parson expressed with unusual folly the sentiments of the great majority of his order. The Commons, at the instigation of the Whigs, actually impeached him at the bar of the Lords. In their folly they used against a pious and innocuous fool the extreme remedy which the constitution provides for the final punishment of impious and dangerous traitors. The country was in a ferment; the Tory party were active; the

moderate classes were alarmed; the clergy were incensed; the Whigs became unpopular.

Harley seized the opportunity. He persuaded Mrs. Masham to persuade the Queen that now was the moment to gratify her new antipathy to her old favourite; that now she should punish the Duchess of Marlborough; that now she should dismiss the Whig ministry. She did so. He came in himself, and made Bolingbroke a secretary of state, and the first member in the House of Commons.

It has been said, and is very likely, that Harley would have preferred to retain in office the quiet and moderate Whigs, and not to bring in Bolingbroke, an extreme and unquiet Tory. The Whig party, however, was compact, and held together; it must be expelled as a whole, or retained as a whole. If it had been wholly retained, Harley could not have come in, and he was therefore obliged to ally himself with the aggravated Tories and with Bolingbroke, who had made himself their mouthpiece. It only completes the mingled character of Bolingbroke to repeat the legend of the time, that his acceptance of office was heard with gladness, not only in grave manor-houses, and by severe High Churchmen, but in more unmentionable places and by more questionable persons. Some ladies of much beauty and little virtue, so runs the legend, were heard to say, "Bolingbroke is minister. He has six thousand guineas a year. Six thousand guineas, and all for us." The auspices of such a ministry were not good.

The public aspect of affairs was, however, in the most critical particular very favourable. While the French War lasted, indeed, the new ministry must be perplexed. They must either retain the Duke of Marlborough as general-in-chief, which was not pleasant, as he was the chief of the party opposed to them, and since probably Mrs. Masham did not wish it; or they must dismiss the duke in the midst of victory, and find a new general, who might be defeated. But this painful alternative was temporary only. The English nation had been sated with sieges and victories, and more than sated with taxes and with debt; it was disposed to peace. The new ministry came therefore into the enjoyment of a great inheritance, the

greatest that has ever fallen to a new ministry. France had been so reduced by Marlborough's victories that she was ready to consent to a peace which a few years before she would have thought most shameful, which a few years before we should have thought most honourable. The new ministry were to make that peace.

The preliminary difficulty soon assumed its worst shape. It became necessary to dismiss the Duke of Marlborough; and, as might be expected, the Duke of Ormond, who succeeded him, was much less successful. There was happily no great defeat, but there were minor disasters, which were magnified by the contrast with past glories. We had been used to a great exploit every year, and we were now asked to be thankful for not being defeated very much. The contrast was painful, and the necessity of making peace became greater than ever.

Up to this time Bolingbroke had been the most successful politician of his age, and almost of any age, in England. He had, it is true, no influence at court. Queen Anne distrusted him; she liked decorous men of regulated life. But, though little over thirty, he was the leader of the House of Commons; the first orator there; the second minister in the Cabinet; the favourite minister of the most ardent section of his party—a section just strengthened by an election. The fame of his oratory filled London, and the fame of his genius filled the country. Mr. Pitt excepted, no Englishman had risen so high and so rapidly under our Parliamentary system. It was at this crisis that his eager nature and his life of excitement began to prepare his downfall, as they had prepared his rise.

The official management of the foreign negotiations was in the hands of Bolingbroke. Lord Dartmouth, the other secretary of state, could speak no French, and Harley, the Prime Minister, could speak but little; but Bolingbroke spoke it well. Harley, too, had no directing ability. He had the defects of the late Lord Aberdeen: he was moderate and useful and judicious. But he could not upon the spur of the moment strike out a distinct policy. Other statesmen must create before he could decide on their creations. Bolingbroke was to devise how a peace should be made.

A plain and strong-headed statesman—such a statesman as Walpole or as Palmerston—would have had little difficulty. France was most anxious to make peace, and it mattered but little for England or for Europe what were the precise conditions of it. There are occasions when a war itself does its own work, and does it better than any pacification. The Crimean War was an instance of this. That war thoroughly destroyed the the prestige of Russia and the pernicious predominance of Russia. At the end of it, what were to be the conditions of peace was almost immaterial. The wars of Marlborough had done their work also. We had gone to war to prevent the acquisition of overbearing power by Louis XIV. If a grandson who was devoted to him had succeeded to Spain and the Spanish empire while France was unexhausted, he would have been a despot in Europe; he would have been terrible to us as Napoleon was terrible. But nine years of continuous defeat had exhausted France, and Louis XIV. was now a vanquished and decayed old man. At his death the crown of France would pass to Louis XV., who was an infant; it was not much to be feared that the policy of France and the policy of Spain would be dangerously connected because their kings were second cousins. Possibly, indeed, Louis XV. might die, and the King of Spain might come to the throne of France. But this was a remote and contingent danger; it would have been unwise in our ancestors to lavish blood and spend treasure because a prince might have died young who really lived to be extremely old. The true object of the war had been accomplished by the war itself, and the substantial task of making a peace was therefore very easy.

The accessories of the task, too, it would seem, were easy also. As we had been victorious in a first-rate war, it was right that we should be dignified in the final pacification. It was right that we should be ready, that we should even be anxious to make peace; but, at any rate, France, who was vanquished, ought to seem equally anxious. Since, in part, the war was a war to reduce her influence over the European imagination, the manner of making peace was at least as material as the terms of it. We were principal members of a great

league, and we had stirred up a part of Spain to resist the French King of Spain. We were bound to keep clear faith with our allies, and bound not to desert brave provinces who had relied principally on our protection.

Bolingbroke was too eager to perceive these plain considerations. He sent a man to Paris to ask for peace; and the French minister was so astounded that he would hardly believe the man. He owned afterwards that, when he was asked the preliminary question, "Do you want a peace?" it seemed to him like asking a lingering invalid whether he wanted to recover. He could hardly bring himself to believe that Bolingbroke's messenger was duly authorised.

The previous life of that messenger certainly was not such as to gain him credit. He was a French abbé named Gaultier, who had been a French spy, and perhaps still was so, in England. He was an acute, plausible person, very fat, and not very respectable, and altogether as unlikely a person to be sent from a victorious nation to a defeated nation as could be imagined.

Nevertheless, the Abbé Gaultier was so sent. He said to Torcy, the French minister, "Do you want a peace? I bring you the means of treating independently of the Dutch, who are unworthy of his Majesty's kindness and the honour he has done them in addressing himself to them so many times to restore peace to Europe." In an ordinary alliance, such a clandestine reconciliation with the enemy, and such a secret desertion of allies, would have been plainly dishonest. There would have been little to say for it, and very few would have been willing to say that little. But the Grand Alliance was not an ordinary one. Its acute framers had perceived the difficulty of their task. They had foreseen the difficulty of retaining in firm cohesion a miscellaneous league of scattered States. They had adopted the best expedient at their disposal: they had prohibited the very commencement of exclusive negotiation by individual States. Their words are as clear as words can be. They are these: "Neutri partium fas sit, Bello semel suscepto, de Pace cum Hoste tractare nisi conjunctim et communicatis conciliis cum altera Parte". These words expressly

forbid such secret missions as those of Gaultier, and were inserted expressly to forbid them.

The separate treaty with Holland was even more express: it said that "no negotiation shall be set on foot by one of the allies without the concurrence of the other; and that each ally shall continually, and from time to time, impart to the other everything which passes in the said negotiation". And yet it was especially from Holland that Bolingbroke was anxious, by every secret disguise, and every diplomatic artifice, to conceal his negotiation. He hoped, by a separate and secret peace, to obtain commercial advantages for the English, in which the Dutch should have no share.

Even after the first mission of Gaultier had terminated, there was an intricate series of secret negotiations, in which he and Prior were employed for us, and Mesnager for the French. Prior expressly required on our behalf "that the secret should be inviolably kept till allowed by both parties to be divulged"; and the French minister wrote to Bolingbroke: "It wholly depends upon the secrecy and good use you will make of the entire confidence he testifies to the Queen of Great Britain; and the King of France extols the firmness of the Queen, and sees with great pleasure the new marks of resolution she shows". It was impossible to desert our allies more absolutely or more dishonourably. It was impossible to violate an express treaty more audaciously or more corruptly.

Nor was the secret negotiation a mere crime; it was also a miserable blunder. Diplomacy could hardly commit a greater. There was a splendid, a nearly unexampled power of compelling France to make a good peace. There was a great coalition against her, which had always been victorious under Eugene and Marlborough; which had obtained such successes as no Englishman had imagined; which had reduced France to a pitch of shame, degradation, and weakness, that surprised her most sanguine enemies, and depressed her most sanguine friends. So long as the coalition was compact, the coalition was all-powerful. But by the mere act of commencing a separate negotiation, Bolingbroke dissolved the coalition. There could be no mutual trust after that. The principal member

of the league deserted the league, and its bond was immediately disunited. We all know what would have been the consequences if England had acted thus in the great war. Suppose Lords Grey and Grenville had come in before the campaign of 1814; suppose that they had sent a secret emissary to Napoleon; suppose that they had offered a separate peace without Spain, or Austria, or Russia. We know that Napoleon would again have been a principal potentate in Europe, for the coalition which alone could extirpate him would have been dissolved.

The truth of these remarks is written on the very face of the Treaty of Utrecht, and is obvious in every part of the negotiation of it. A few months before Louis had been willing to abandon Spain and to abandon his grandson. He had said: "If you can take Spain from him, take it; I will not help him". But the allies were not content. They required that Louis should compel his grandson to resign, and this he considered dishonourable. But at Utrecht it was not even proposed that Philip should abandon Spain; that the House of Bourbon should possess Spain was a conceded and admitted principle. We had dissolved the European confederacy, and we could not hope to attain its objects.

Nor was the desertion of the other powers combined with us in the Grand Alliance our only desertion, or our worst. All these powers were States of some magnitude, and some were States of great magnitude. They would be able to go on as they had always gone on—to shift for themselves, as they had always shifted. But we also deserted others who were not so independent. We had incited the Catalans in the north-east of Spain to resist the French King of Spain; we had promised them in express terms our support and aid; for a long time we had given them that aid. But at the Peace of Utrecht we deserted them. The Catalans made a brave resistance, but a small province could do nothing against a great nation. The Catalans were soon overcome, and deprived of all their liberties. Throughout Europe, and doubtless throughout England also, there were many murmurs against our policy. We had encouraged a brave people to rebel; we had even threatened

them if they did not rebel; and when they did rebel, we deserted them. If, at present, France and England were to incite the Poles to rebel against Russia, they hardly *could* desert them: the public opinion of the world is now so powerful; in Queen Anne's time public opinion could only murmur, but it did murmur. The Peace of Utrecht, men said, was a base crime as well as a gross blunder.

But why, it will be asked, did Bolingbroke commit so gross a blunder? What reasons could have rendered it plausible to him? The principal answer is the principal key to his character. With many splendid gifts, he was exceedingly defective in cool and plain judgment. He failed where in all ages such men as Alcibiades have failed. Whether by nature he was much gifted with judgment we cannot tell; the probability is that he was about as well gifted as other men. But his life was such as to render a cool judgment impossible. "His fine imagination," says Lord Chesterfield, "was often heated and exhausted with his body in celebrating and almost deifying the prostitute of the night; and his convivial joys were pushed to all the extravagancy of frantic bacchanals." Swift tells graphic stories of his drinking till his associates could drink no longer and his being left at three in the morning calling for "t'other flask". Many men lead gross lives and keep cool heads, but such are not men of Bolingbroke's temperament. A man like Walpole, or a man like Louis Napoleon, is protected by an unsensitive nature from intellectual destruction. But such a man as Bolingbroke, whose nature is warm and whose imagination is excitable, imbibes the eager poison into the very heart of his mind. Such is our protection against the possibilities of an Alcibiades. No one who has not a vivid imagination can succeed in such a career; and any man of vivid imagination that career would burn away and destroy. Cold men may be wild in life and not wild in mind. But warm and eager men, fit to be the favourites of society, and fit to be great orators, will be erratic not only in conduct but in judgment. They will see men "like trees walking".

Bolingbroke's excitement did not prevent his working. He

laboured many hours and wrote many letters. He often complains of the number of hours he has been at his desk, and of the labours which were thrown upon him. But his work probably only excited him the more; for a time *vires acquirit eundo* is the law of such wild strength. In the course of the negotiations he went to Paris, became the idol of society there, and used his social advantages efficiently for political purposes. To dazzle people more, he learned, or pretended to learn, the Spanish language, to read such diplomatic documents as were written in it. But such minor excellences could not mend the incurable badness of a peace commenced by a surrender of the best we had to surrender, by a dissolution of our alliance. A plain strong-headed man would have left alone the accessory advantages, and succeeded in the main point. Without Spanish and without French, Walpole would have made a good peace; Bolingbroke could not do so with both.

Bolingbroke, too, had a scheme, as imaginative and excited men will have. He knew that in relinquishing Spain to the House of Bourbon, he was giving the opponents of peace a great argumentative advantage. The mass of mankind, who judge by visible symbols, considered that a peace by which the king whom we had opposed should reign in Spain, and by which the king whom we had proposed did not reign there, was a gross failure. In sound argument, it was probably right for us to concede. As we have explained, the war had accomplished its own work; France was excessively weakened, and there was little fear of present danger from her. If, by a possible death, the crown of France should fall to the King of Spain, it would be time enough then to prevent the same person from reigning in the two kingdoms. The Treaty of Utrecht provides that the same prince shall not reign in both; and, if necessary, we could go to war to enforce the treaty. The Bourbon king was popular in Spain, and was preferred by the Spaniards to any one else. It would have been hard to dislodge him. But Bolingbroke did not like to rely on these plain arguments. He hoped to make the peace popular by an appeal to our commercial jealousy, by gaining mercantile

advantages for ourselves which our rivals the Dutch did not share. He obtained for us the celebrated Assiento contract, giving us the right of carrying negro slaves to the West Indies, and also certain privileges which would have given our manufacturers great advantage in the French markets. He hoped this commercial bribe would silence the national conscience—that it would induce us to forget our treachery to our allies, our desertion of the Catalans, and the establishment of the House of Bourbon in Spain. He hoped it would make the peace popular.

He was disappointed. The reception of that peace by the nation, and especially by the Tory party, was very like the reception of Mr. Disraeli's great Budget of 1852. A great secret had been long paraded of something which was to please everybody: it was divulged, and it pleased nobody. Bolingbroke may himself describe the effect that his work produced on the more moderate portion of his party:—

"The whimsical or the Hanover Tories continued zealous in appearance with us till the peace was signed. I saw no people so eager for the conclusion of it. Some of them were in such haste, that they thought any peace preferable to the least delay, and omitted no instances to quicken their friends who were actors in it. As soon as the treaties were perfected and laid before Parliament, the scheme of these gentlemen began to disclose itself entirely. Their love of the peace, like other passions, cooled by enjoyment. They grew nice about the construction of the articles, could come up to no direct approbation, and, being let into the secret of what was to happen, would not preclude themselves from the glorious advantage of rising on the ruins of their friends and of their party."

Nothing could be more natural than their conduct. The moderate Tory party, and most sensible men, wished for a satisfactory peace made in a satisfactory manner: they wished for dignity in diplomacy, and desirable results. They were disappointed. After a war which every one was proud of, we concluded a peace which nobody was proud of, in a manner that every one was ashamed of.

The commercial treaties on which Bolingbroke relied, so far from helping him, were a hindrance to him. The right of taking slaves to the West Indies was indeed popular: the day for anti-slavery scruples had not commenced. But, in return

for the privileges which the French gave to our manufacturers, we had given many privileges to them. We had established an approximation to free-trade, and every one was aghast. The English producer clamoured for protection, and he has seldom clamoured in vain. The commercial treaties required the consent of Parliament, and were rejected. If Bolingbroke had been a free-trader upon principle, his convictions might have consoled him. But he professed to know nothing of commerce, and did know nothing. His books are full of nonsense on such topics: he hated the City because they were Whigs, and he hated the Dutch because he had deserted them; and these were his cardinal sentiments on mercantile affairs. He speaks of "matters, such as that of commerce, which the negotiators of the Peace of Utrecht could not be supposed to understand". Certainly he did not understand them. He only directed his subordinates to get out of the French as much for ourselves, and as little for the Dutch, as possible.

"Instead of gathering strength" (says Bolingbroke), "either as a ministry or as a party, we grew weaker every day. The peace had been judged with reason to be the only solid foundation whereupon we could erect a Tory system; and yet when it was made, we found ourselves at a full stand. Nay, the very work, which ought to have been the basis of our strength, was in part demolished before our eyes and we were stoned with the ruins of it."

In our time he would have been really stoned. The fierce warlike disposition of the English people would not have endured such dishonour. We may doubt if it would have endured any peace. It certainly would not have endured the best peace, unless it were made with dignity and with honesty. We should have been wildly elated by Marlborough's victories, and little in a mood to bear shame and to be guilty of desertion. The English people has been much the same for centuries. In country manor-houses, where a son had been killed for the cause which was sacrificed—in alehouses, where men were used to hear of glorious victories—in large towns, where the wrongs of injured races like the Catalans were understood—through a whole nation, which has ever been proud, brave, and honourable, a mean peace, effected by desertion, must have been abhorred.

It was merely endured because it was made, and because in those days, when communication was slow, public opinion, as in America now, did not distinctly form itself till the crisis for action was over. But though for the moment endured, it was long abhorred. For very many years half our political talk was coloured by it. It was to the Tories what the coalition between Lord North and Fox was to the Whigs, a principal operating cause in excluding them from office during fifty years.

And, what for the time was worse, the Tory ministry of the moment was disunited. "Whilst this was doing," says Bolingbroke, "Harley looked on, as if he had not been a party to all which had passed; broke now and then a jest, which savoured of the Inns of Court, and the bad company in which he had been bred; and on those occasions where his station obliged him to speak of business, was absolutely unintelligible". In reality Harley disliked his position. He had always been a moderate man, respected by moderate men; he had the reputation of a man of care and judgment, and he had thriven by that reputation. On a sudden he became a party to disreputable peace, at which even moderate Whigs were frantic, for which even moderate Tories could not vote. That the negotiations had commenced by artifice and deceit did not horrify him much, for he was a man much given to stratagem. But he knew also that the negotiation had ended in conspicuous meanness and unpopular concessions; he felt that his reputation for judgment was weakened. All shrewd observers knew that there would soon be disunion between Harley, the old head of the moderate Tories, and Bolingbroke, the present head of the extreme Tories. Swift, who was a very shrewd observer, and who was close at hand, knew that there was already disunion.

Before the treaties had been discussed by, and the commercial part of them rejected in, the House of Commons, Bolingbroke made another error. He left the House of Commons. Harley had been created Earl of Oxford, and he could not endure to be inferior to him. There was much delay in conferring the peerage, and he was very angry at it. He was, Oxford says, "in the utmost rage against the Treasurer, Lady

Masham, and without sparing the greatest," and made "outrageous speeches". A wise friend would have observed to him that no greater kindness could have been done him than to refuse him a peerage altogether. The great but gradual revolution which was consummated in the time of Walpole was then beginning to be apparent. Before Queen Anne's time our most conspicuous statesmen had been, during the most important part of their lives, members of the House of Lords; since Queen Anne's time they have at similar periods been usually members of the House of Commons. There are several causes for this, but the principal is one on which Bolingbroke has often commented. From time immemorial the Commons have been the guardians of the public purse; and whenever the public purse was to be touched, they have always been the first body in the State. But before the revolution they were seldom wanted. They granted the king, at the commencement of his reign, an estimated revenue, which was supposed to be adequate to the estimated expenditure in time of peace. As our wealth was rapidly increasing, it was often more than sufficient. In time of war the House of Commons must be applied to; new money was needful for new expenses; but the ordinary expenditure went on every year without their being consulted or required. The expense of William's wars and Queen Anne's wars made a great change: taxation became larger than it had ever been, though very small as it seems to us now. Since that time the estimated revenue which the Crown yearly enjoyed, without additional Parliamentary aid, has scarcely ever been adequate to the estimated expenditure. There has yearly been a Budget, and yearly a recourse to the House of Commons. The position of a minister in the House of Commons has therefore greatly risen. Nine years out of ten the nation could at present dispense with a House of Lords—though a useful, it is an auxiliary power; but every year we want a House of Commons, for it has to grant funds of primary necessity. The minister who can manage the Commons, and extract from them the necessary moneys, has then become our most necessary minister.

The change was just beginning; for Walpole, Bolingbroke's

schoolfellow and Parliamentary rival, ruled his generation by his Parliamentary and financial abilities. But Bolingbroke was too eager and impetuous to foresee the action of this powerful but obscure cause. The tradition had been, that the peers were superior to the Commons, and he adhered to this tradition. He was angry till he obtained his peerage.

Nor was he satisfied when he did obtain it. He was made a viscount only, and Harley had been made an earl. He could not bear to be inferior to him in anything, especially as there was an extinct earldom in his own family. He was vexed, angry, and dissatisfied. Once he went out of town, and would attend to no business for days. He was angry too with the press. The Peace of Utrecht was attacked and assailed, and it was his peace. It is true that Bolingbroke should have been able to bear literary comments, even when rather bitter. He was himself through life an unscrupulous writer, using the press without reluctance and without cessation. He was then employing Swift, the most bitter writer of libels, both political and personal, that can be conceived. He lived with Swift in intimacy, and printed his libels. He gave him political information and ideas, and praised him when he used them so as most to hurt his adversaries. He ought to have been able to bear anything, yet he could bear nothing. He prosecuted many more persons than it was usual to prosecute then, and far more than have been prosecuted since. He thought, with a continental wit, that "a press is free when Government newspapers are licentious". He thought that everything should be said for him, and that nothing should be said against him. The copyists of Alcibiades are commonly irritable, for neither their nature nor their habits teach them forbearance.

But neither Bolingbroke's disunion with his principal colleague, nor the attacks of the press, were his greatest danger. He was in the worst political position which can be imagined. As we have explained, the principal question of the age was a question of dynasty: after the peace with France it was the sole great question; it is in the nature of a topic so absorbing to swallow up every subject of minor interest. There were only two solutions of the problem possible. The law prescribed

one, and a sort of superstition prescribed another. The Act of Settlement said that the House of Hanover was to succeed Queen Anne; the doctrine of non-resistance said that the Pretender was to succeed her. The Jacobites adhered to the doctrine of non-resistance. The Whigs adhered to the Act of Parliament. Both these parties had a definite solution of the principal topic of the hour. But between these fluctuated the great mass of the Tory party, who did not like the House of Hanover because it had no hereditary right, who did not like the Pretender because he was a Roman Catholic. This party objected to both possible solutions; they lived in the vague hope that the Pretender might turn Protestant—that some unforeseen circumstance would intervene—that Queen Anne would last their time. For persons in a private station such a state of mind was very possible and very natural. But it was of this very party that Bolingbroke was the spokesman and the leader, and he was a minister. He could not well remain without a distinct policy. Queen Anne, though not old, was often ill. She was suspected to be, and we now know she was, very near her death. He must make a choice.

Yet which king was Bolingbroke to choose? If he chose the House of Hanover, he himself ought not to be minister. This was the Whig candidate, this was the candidate whom his party disliked—at whom they murmured—whom they declined to support. A Tory ministry which should bring in the House of Hanover was like a Derbyite ministry that should propose free trade or reform of Parliament. It was a ministry which tried to maintain its existence by denying its party tenets. Probably in those times a Tory ministry could not have done what we have seen them do in our own time. Party spirit ran much stronger in Queen Anne's time than in ours. The political contentions of London were like the contests at a borough election now. At three o'clock on the polling day it is very difficult to change your politics and keep your character. So it was in London then. A fierce strife raged. Whig society and Tory society were separated like two hostile camps, and a deserter from one to the other was sure of contemptuous hatred from those he left, and of contemptuous

patronage from those to whom he came. Bolingbroke could not do even once that which Mr. Disraeli has done twice.

Bolingbroke's enemies have been very anxious to fix on him a formed design to bring in the Pretender. He would doubtless have been very glad to do so, if he could have formed a coherent scheme. But he could not. Oxford was far too moderate and timid a man to break the law, or to plan to break it. He had himself supported the Act of Settlement. He knew that the Hanoverian succession, though not popular to the imagination of any class, was acceptable to the reason of the most thinking class. He knew that the aristocracy, the large towns, and all the cultivated part of the community, were in favour of it. He knew that, as the aristocratic classes had the command of the House of Lords, of the small boroughs, and of very many counties, as the great towns were of themselves favourable, the House of Hanover was sure of a majority in Parliament. He knew that the general vulgar, and especially the rural vulgar, who were favourable to the House of Stuart, though numerically strong, were but weak in Parliamentary representation. He was probably a party to some covert intrigues, for intrigue was intrinsically agreeable to him; but, in reality, he was too timid to abandon the plain and legal course for a tortuous and illegal one. Bolingbroke had, on the other hand, a constitutional predilection for violent courses, and no particular objection to an illegal course. If he could have turned out Oxford—if he could have carried his party with him, he would certainly have contrived some scheme for proclaiming the Pretender at Queen Anne's death. But even he was not mad enough to commit himself to a definite plan before he knew that he should have the power to execute it. In the meantime "Tom Harley," the prime minister's brother, exactly expressed the position of the ministry. "We ought," he said, "to be better or worse with Hanover than we are." The case, as men saw it then, was simple. The Queen was daily approaching the grave. The ministry in power were uncertain what to do in the event of her death. They had "no settled intention" of breaking the law, Bolingbroke tells us; but he does not venture to contend

that they had a settled intention of obeying it. They were drifting to a crisis without a plan.

Nor was Bolingbroke comfortable while the Queen lived. She herself did not like him. A smaller person has never been placed by the caprices of fate amid great affairs than the "good Queen Anne". She had not, Swift says, "a sufficient stock of amity" for more than one person at a time; she was always choosing a favourite upon whom to concentrate her affections exclusively. Her comprehension was as limited as her affections. She seriously objected, it is said, to one minister for appearing before her in a tie-wig instead of a full-bottom; and even if this anecdote has been exaggerated by continual narration, it expressses the sort of objections which ruled her mind and determined her conduct. She had a strong objection to all license; decorum was a sort of morality to her, as to most great ladies; she would have been much puzzled to fix where manners ended and where morals began. Bolingbroke was license personified; and therefore she distrusted and disliked him. She did not altogether approve, either, of the Peace of Utrecht. She probably did not understand the details, but she evidently understood that it was a "perplexing matter," and "not the sort of thing to which she had been accustomed under Lord Marlborough". The original strength of the Tory ministry had been in the Queen's predilection for Miss Hill, afterwards Lady Masham; Harley ruled Miss Hill, and Miss Hill ruled the Queen. But the Queen was not quite sure about Miss Hill. One of her tastes was a taste for aristocracy; and she was half ashamed of having taken a great liking to a waiting-maid who had been placed about her. She had an old predilection also for the Duchess of Somerset, by birth the last of the Percies, whose husband was a Whig. Swift was never easy as to the effect of this friendship. He said, "the Duchess of Somerset is a proud woman, but I will pull her down"; so he libelled her, which did not make her more propitious to him or his masters. There was always a danger that the ex-waiting-maid, on whom all depended, should be discarded, as the Duchess of Marlborough had been discarded; that the Duchess of Somerset might become prime

favourite in her stead; that the policy of the Government, and all the persons of our rulers, should be again changed by the inexplicable caprice of a quiet old lady.

And Bolingbroke had another difficulty. The distrust of him was not confined to Queen Anne. It extended through his party, and was an inevitable result of his peculiar position. He was an eloquent man without prejudices, speaking the prejudices of men who could not speak. But the speechless client and the eloquent advocate differ in nature so much that they can never much like or well understand each other. The Tory party knew that when Bolingbroke expressed their favourite conviction, he did not himself believe a word of what he was saying. And they could not tell what he did believe. And, being for the most part regular men of middle life from the agricultural counties, they did not much like to trust as their leader a young man of loose life about town. After the Peace of Utrecht especially, he could not tell what they would think, and they could not tell what he would do. They could never have anticipated his doing anything so mean as that, and he could never understand what disgrace there was in so obvious a diplomatic stratagem as breach of faith. In our own time, it is easy to vex Tories. You have only to ask, "What is Dizzy's next move?" Such short words would not have suited our formal ancestors. But many a courteous Whig, doubtless, asked many a Tory, "What is to be my Lord Bolingbroke's next fine stroke of policy?" and the Tory could not have known what to say. So long as Oxford was at the head of affairs common men felt that there was still something ordinary about the Government. But if Bolingbroke were to become sole minister, or chief minister, we should be subjected to the bold schemes of undiluted genius.

In this difficult position Bolingbroke showed great ability. He could not, indeed, remove its irremovable defects. He could not declare for the House of Hanover; and he could not declare for the House of Stuart. He could not remove the dislike which a dull Queen, and a dull party, felt for a brilliant man. But what could be done he did. He showed great Parliamentary ability, and was ever ready with wonderful elo-

quence. He pleased his party by a Schism Bill, agreeable to High Churchmen, and disagreeable to Dissenters. He obtained the favour of the waiting-maid, if he could not obtain that of the Queen, her mistress. Miss Hill (or Lady Masham, as she now was) was a sort of relation of Oxford's; and this had first brought them together. For a long time the union was firm; he gave her much counsel and some money, and she gave him much power. But Oxford had a conscience, or vestiges of a conscience, in the use of public money. He was not ready to give Miss Hill, or Miss Hill's brother, all that they wanted. Swift puts it that he was too careful of the public interest for the corruption of the time; or, as we should put it, he would not bribe without limit against the public interest out of the public treasury. But Bolingbroke had no scruples; he bid higher; he gave Miss Hill and "Jack Hill" all he could, and promised that they should have more if they would make him first minister and maintain him as such. He himself may tell the result: "The Earl of Oxford was removed on Tuesday; the Queen died on Sunday. What a world is this, and how our fortune banters us!" Such was the close of three years of intrigue. He had bribed the waiting-maid just when the mistress was no more.

Nor at the moment was this the worst. The Queen's distrust of Bolingbroke had lasted till her death. The white staff—the "magic wand," as Bolingbroke calls it, long disused in English politics, but then the symbol of the lord high treasurer and of the prime minister—had been taken from Oxford, but it had not been given to any one. Bolingbroke could not gain it for himself. It was arranged that the Treasury should be put into commission, as it had been in King William's time, and as it always now is. Bolingbroke was to continue secretary of state, and be in fact principal minister; yet he was not to have the indefinite power of the lord treasurer —the mystic power of the white staff. But on her death-bed Queen Anne felt that Bolingbroke could not be trusted even so far. She was dying, and knew that she was dying. She doubtless felt that it was her duty to place the administration in the hands of some one who would obey the law on her death.

She did not like the family of Hanover; she had the most keen repugnance to the presence of any of them in England during her life. She could not endure to see her successor close at hand, and it probably never struck her as a matter of duty to save the country from a possible convulsion of civil war. She was a very little-minded woman, but at the same time she was a decorous woman, and a well-meaning woman. She would not have planned or dared or wished to break the law which she had passed. As death was coming upon her, she knew that the practical premiership of Bolingbroke would endanger the security of the Act of Settlement. Of all statesmen he was least likely to obey it, and therefore most unfit to be prime minister when it was of critical importance to obey it. Obscurely, perhaps, but effectually, Queen Anne felt this. She gave the white staff to Shrewsbury; and Bolingbroke's three days of premiership were at an end.

Probably Bolingbroke felt the disaster the more that he was obliged to seem to assent to it. Shrewsbury had been acting as confidential adviser to the Queen for some time, to Bolingbroke's dismay. He knew, he said, how he stood with Oxford—that was open war; but how he stood with Shrewsbury, he did not know. As soon as the Queen was despaired of, the privy council was summoned, and by ordinary rule only those summoned should attend; a ministry thus secures a privy council of chosen friends. But at this meeting two Whig dukes, the Duke of Somerset and the Duke of Argyle, attended, though not summoned, and by their influence the council was induced to ask the Queen to make Shrewsbury high treasurer; and Bolingbroke was obliged to assent. Neither in the nation, nor at the court, had he substantial influence or effectual power.

He had in truth no alternative. A frantic bishop, Atterbury, bishop of Rochester, wanted him to proclaim the Pretender. But Bolingbroke, though a hot-headed statesman, had a notion of law and a perception of obvious consequences. He was not a hot-headed divine: he knew that by law George I. must be proclaimed at once; he knew that Shrewsbury, who wielded the white staff, which every one would obey, would at

once proclaim George I. He knew that he could not himself command the obedience of a watchman. All the force of government had at once passed from him, and he acquiesced in the new order of things. He assisted at the proclamation of George I.

The law had indicated the steps which should be taken in case of the Queen's death, and before her successor could be brought over from Germany. A document was produced by the Hanoverian minister, naming Lords Justices, who were to administer the government until the arrival of George I. Of these Lords Justices, Bolingbroke, of course, was not one. They were all sound Whigs, and steady friends to the House of Hanover. As Bolingbroke had for four years been wielding the force of government so as to give pain to them, they immediately began to exercise it so as to give pain to him. They appointed Addison as their secretary; desired all documents to be addressed to him; and, though Bolingbroke was still in high office, and had at the last moment been real prime minister, they kept him waiting at their door with studied circumstances of indignity, which were much remarked on then, and which much tried his philosophy.

It would, however, have well been for Bolingbroke if mere indignities like these had been all which was in store for him, or all which he deserved. When Parliament met, zealous Whigs naturally began to murmur a good deal as to the past. Bolingbroke had ruled them hardly during his reign. His ministry had removed Marlborough from his appointments; his ministry had expelled Walpole from the House of Commons. Walpole would most likely have said that the Whig "innings" had arrived, and that the actions of their predecessors must be scrutinised. Bolingbroke for a time affected to fear nothing. Oxford went to and fro in London, and Bolingbroke followed his example. All at once he changed his policy. He appeared at the theatre in state, and took pains while there to attract attention; went home, changed his dress, and fled to France.

In truth, he was thoroughly frightened. He declared that "his blood was," he understood, "to have been the cement of a new alliance," between the moderate Tories and the Whigs.

Some have traced this notion to the hints of Marlborough, but it was most likely due as much to Bolingbroke's own conscience. He knew well that the secret negotiations prior to the Peace of Utrecht would not bear even fair scrutiny. He knew that they were now to be subjected to hostile scrutiny. Even from impartial judges he could only expect condemnation, and his case would now be tried by his enemies. His life, indeed, was in no danger. Neither the nation, nor the party opposed to him, were inclined to bloodshed; but he felt he was in danger of something. His guilty conscience magnified the possibilities of punishment; to escape them, he did exactly what was worst for his reputation. Though it was as much as pleading guilty, he fled.

He was attainted as a traitor in his absence, and there may be legal doubt as to whether the attainder was deserved. That a minister who advises his sovereign to violate a treaty, and who violates it accordingly, is worthy of severe punishment, will be admitted by every one; and that Bolingbroke had done this is beyond question or dispute. But this offence does not amount to high treason, and the details of an incidental transaction as to the town of Tournay had to be pressed into the service; and it required much stretching to make these amount even to a constructive treason. But whatever might be the legal correctness or the incorrectness of the precise punishment inflicted on Bolingbroke is scarcely material now. He well deserved a bill of "Pains and Penalties"; and whether he was or was not visited with the very penalty that was most suitable, does not matter much.

On Bolingbroke's arrival in France, he looked about him for awhile. He was at once solicited by the emissaries of the Pretender, but he deliberated for some time, and it would have been wiser for him to have deliberated longer. He well knew that, though there was much latent Jacobite sentiment in England, there was no good material for a Jacobite rebellion. Many squires and rectors and peasants would have been glad to see the legitimate king restored; but their zeal was not very active; it belonged to the region of traditional sentiment and vague prejudice, rather than to that of practical and vigorous

life. The House of Hanover had the force of the Government and the *sense* of the country in its favour. It was in possession, and Bolingbroke was aware that the Jacobites could not expel it from possession. He knew all this well, but his passions were too strong for his judgment; from excitability, restlessness, and rage, he joined the Pretender. He could not help being busy, and hoped, or half-hoped, to be revenged on his enemies.

He could not, however, long agree with his new associates. The descent from actual office to imaginary office was too sudden; to many men it was pleasing to be secretary of state to a mock king, but it was very painful to one who had just been secretary to a real queen. His contempt, too, for the Irish associates of the Pretender was unbounded. He saw that they were hot-headed and ignorant men—who knew nothing of the country which they hoped to rule—whom that country would not endure for a day. He knew that the Roman Catholics in England were a small and unpopular body, and their aid more dangerous than their enmity. The genuine Jacobites distrusted him also. He said that they were untrustworthy because they were fools, and they said that he was untrustworthy because he was a traitor. This could not last; after a brief interval, he left the Pretender and his Court: they began to slander him, and he began to speak much evil of them.

With his secession from the Jacobites Bolingbroke's active career ends. He was afterwards only an aspirant for a career. He was, after several years, permitted to return to England, and to enjoy his estate, though he was an attainted traitor; but the attainder was not reversed, and while it was in force he could not take his seat in the House of Lords, or hold any office whatever. He wrote much against Walpole, but he did not turn out Walpole. On one occasion he was much mortified because Pulteney and the practical opponents of Walpole said that the support of his name rather weakened than strengthened them. He gave in a long memorial of suggestions to George I.; but the king said they were "bagatelles". He then fancied that he should become minister because of the support of Lady Suffolk, George II.'s mistress; but Lady Suf-

folk had no influence, and Queen Caroline, who had predominant influence, supported Walpole. He then hoped to be minister under the Prince of Wales, George II.'s son, and wrote a treatise on a "Patriot King" for that Prince's use. But George II. outlived his son; and he was saved the mortification of seeing how little that small prince would have carried out his great ideas. Though he survived Queen Anne more than thirty years, he never after her death attained to a day's power in England. Three years of eager unwise power, and thirty-five of sickly longing and impotent regret—such, or something like it, will ever be in this cold modern world the fate of an Alcibiades.

WHAT LORD LYNDHURST REALLY WAS.

(1863.)

A GREAT phenomenon has passed away from English public life. Not long since, Lord Lyndhurst observed: "My Lords,—I well remember the breaking out of the French Revolution in 1789, the death of Louis the Sixteenth, and the course of the consequent events". There is not, perhaps, a conspicuous public man now in Europe who could say this; certainly there is none in England. The picturesque features of Lord Lyndhurst's mind and character made the phenomenon still more striking. The characteristic of his intellect was the combination of great force and great lucidity. Every sentence from him was full of light and energy. His face and brow were, perhaps, unrivalled in our time for the expression of pure intellect, and he preserved the physical aptitude for public oratory to an old age when most men are scarcely fit for mere conversation. To the very extremity of a protracted life—and this is very rare—he both looked, and was, a great man. The intellect was undimmed, and the power of expression hardly abated. There is no such man left.

It is very natural that such a man should have lived till his career should be half a myth or a legend. Few, indeed, of those who, during the last few years, gazed on that remarkable face, had any distinct conception of the life which had been led by the person they saw. The singular vigour of his conversation charmed those who resorted to him, and they were led to believe that a man who talked so very well could hardly have acted very ill. The lives which have been put forth in the newspapers, carefully prepared, like those of most old men, are merely panegyrics. For once the physical vigour of a long old age has redeemed, in public estimation, the errors and vices

of a long life. But it is not so that history should be written; it is in no strain of panegyric that an impartial observer can review the career of Lord Lyndhurst.

The beginning of the public life of Lord Lyndhurst was towards the end of the long reign of the Tory party. Sir George Lewis justly observed "that the Tories in 1815 had an immense balance of popularity arising from the successful issue of the great war, and that they managed to spend it most completely before 1830". They governed, as all Conservatives even would now admit, in precisely the wrong spirit.

They governed, not in the spirit of Mr. Pitt, but in the spirit of Lord Eldon. They maintained not only the main institutions of the country which were acceptable and popular, but also the minutest abuses which, in the course of years, had clung to those institutions. They connected the name of the Tory party with every petty abuse and misdemeanour throughout the country. They would alter nothing, and they would let nothing be altered. When public meetings were convened to express public opinion, the organs of the Government cried out sedition, and talked as if a "French Revolution" were going to break out here. By this stupid—there is no milder epithet that is fitting—and narrow-minded policy, the Tories caused the outburst of public opinion which carried the Reform Bill. Their best organs have admitted as much of late years. "A few more drops," said the *Quarterly Review* not long since, "of Eldonine, and we should have had the People's Charter." The Tory party kept the nation in such tight and painful fetters, that it was driven wild, and rose and broke them. If the Tories will permit no improvement—so went the national idea —we must have an end of Toryism.

All this was excusable and natural in men like Lord Eldon. He had been a Tory from his youth, and he had been confirmed in Toryism by the events of the French Revolution. When the peace came, and a new generation sprang up, he was too old to change his creed. He honestly believed that it was necessary to resist every innovation, no matter of what sort, and to maintain everything, no matter of what kind. In Lord Eldon such conduct was natural and excusable. But it was

not natural in a young man of great intelligence in the next generation. Able young men well knew that this illiberal Toryism was out of place, and an anachronism. It was in 1818, when the effects of this system were beginning to be plainly visible, that Lord Lyndhurst chose to connect himself with it.

He did so under circumstances of great suspicion. He had held — loosely, we apprehend — some sort of ultra-Liberal opinions. He had been, at any rate, in the habit of talking in that style at young men's parties and the circuit mess. He was a Liberal, if he was anything; and charges continued to be made against him for many years of having deserted his principles. It is, indeed, utterly inconceivable that Lord Lyndhurst should have believed in Toryism such as Toryism was in 1818. He would have no title to fame if he had believed in it. His claim is an intellectual claim. He is said, and justly said, to have had, when he chose to exert it, an intellect of the highest cultivation, more fitted than almost any other in his time for the perception of the truth;—a first-rate judicial mind, with culture and experience far transcending the ordinary judicial range.

It is inconsistent with this claim that he should really have been on the wrong side in all the important questions of his time. It is absurd to say that the greatest political intellect of his time—and some such claim as this might be justly made for Lord Lyndhurst—really believed that the Catholics should not be emancipated; that the Corn-laws should be maintained; that there should be no reform in Parliament; that the narrow system of 1818 was a perfect or even an endurable system. We do not mean to charge him with acting contrary to his principles—that charge was made years ago, but was the exaggerated charge of political opponents, who saw that there was something to blame, but who in their eagerness and haste overdid their accusation. The true charge is that he had no principles, that he did not care to have opinions. If he had applied his splendid judicial faculties to the arguments for Free-trade or for Catholic emancipation, he would soon enough have discovered the truth. But he never did apply them.

There is a story of a clever young official who said "it was inconvenient to keep opinions". And this exactly expresses Lord Lyndhurst's life and sentiments. They tell a story which may be true or false, but is certainly characteristic, of what he said as to the Act which bears his name forbidding a man to marry a deceased wife's sister. The real object of that Act was to please certain particular people who had married their sisters-in-law, and as it stands to this day it legalises all antecedent marriages. As it was originally brought in, it legalised subsequent marriages also. Persons conversant with the clergy, and other strict people, represented to Lord Lyndhurst that there would be an outcry against this. He replied, "Put it the other way then, forbid the future marriages; I am sure I do not care which way it is". He wanted to serve a temporary purpose, and he did so always. He regarded politics as a game; to be played first for himself, and then for his party. He did not act contrary to his opinion, but he did not care to form a true opinion.

This was the explanation of his joining the Tories. Not to join them was poverty then; to join them was wealth. They were firmly fixed in office. As the satirist then sang—

> "Naught's constant in the human race,
> Except the Whigs not getting into place".

As was the pleasant habit of that time, the Government picked out Mr. Copley, a clever young lawyer, and gave him a seat in Parliament.

He accepted it, though he had no more formed opinion that Toryism was true than he had that Mahometanism was true. He took up the opinions of the existing Government and advocated them, and to the end of his life would have thought it "nonsense and rubbish" to act otherwise.

Probably, however, he would have acted more profitably if he had acted more conscientiously. It really was a case when honesty was the best policy. If he had paid a fair attention to the subjects of his time, he would have been on what all parties now admit to be the right side. If he had had a sincere wish to improve and benefit mankind, he would have been forward in the ranks of the Liberal party, who were

then employed in doing so. The chances of life were various, but most likely he would have had his reward. The Whigs wanted a first-rate judge who was also a first-rate politician. During their long period of power they have never possessed one. The Whigs have been in power, roughly speaking, five and twenty years out of the last thirty. If Lord Lyndhurst had been their leader instead of the Tory leader, he would have had far more of what he valued, more power and influence, more wealth, and greater station. He would have been among the foremost of the winners instead of being amongst the foremost of the losers. There was nothing which he would have liked so much. There was nothing which he appreciated so much as success in the game of political life; nothing that he despised and detested like want of success.

It is pleasant to turn to a more favourable topic. Many duties Lord Lyndhurst may have neglected, or despised, or disowned; but one duty, and a neglected one, he performed better, perhaps, on the whole, than any man in his generation. He had the most disciplined intellect in his time. There is in every one of his productions evidence not only of natural sinewy strength, but of careful culture and intellectual gymnastic. Lord Brougham tells a story of finding him occupied over the integral calculus for amusement's sake, years ago. Every line of his speeches tells how well he understood, and how well he acted on, the manly principles of Greek oratory. Few men led a laxer life; few men, to the very end of their life, were looser in their conversation; but there was no laxity in his intellect. Everything there was braced and knit. Great oratory is but a transitory art; few turn even to the best speeches of the past, and even the best of these are so clogged with the detail of the time that they are dull and wearisome to a hasty posterity. Few will recur to Lord Lyndhurst's speeches, but those who do so will find some of the best, if not the very best, specimens in English, of the best manner in which a man of great intellect can address and influence the intellects of others. Their art, we might almost say their merit, is of the highest kind, for it is concealed. The words seem the simplest, clearest, and most

natural that a man could use. It is only the instructed man who knows that he could not himself have used them, and that few men could.

Such was the great man whom we have just buried: great in power, but not great in the use of power; a politician, not a statesman; a man of small principle and few scruples. Of him, far more truly than of Burke, it may be said that "to party he gave up what was meant for mankind".

He played the game of life for low and selfish objects, and yet, by the intellectual power with which he played it, he redeemed that game from its intrinsic degradation.

SIR GEORGE CORNEWALL LEWIS.[1]

(1863.)

FEW more curious sights were, not long since, to be seen in London than that of Sir G. C. Lewis at the War Office. What is now a melancholy recollection was, when we used to see it, an odd mixture of amusing anomalies. The accidental and bit-by-bit way in which all minor business is managed in England has drifted our public offices into scattered, strange, and miscellaneous places. It has drifted the war minister into the large drawing-room of an old mansion, which is splendid enough to receive fashionable people, and large enough to receive a hundred people. In this great and gorgeous apartment sat, a few months since, a homely scholar in spectacles, whose face bore traces of sedentary labour, and whose figure was bent into the student-stoop. Such a plain man looked odd enough in such a splendid place. But it was much more odd to think that that man in that place supremely regulated the War Department of England. The place should have been a pacific drawing-room, and the man was a pacific student. He looked like a conveyancer over deeds, like a scholar among treatises, like a jurist making a code; he looked like the last man to preside over martial pomp and military expeditions.

So *unique* a man as Sir George Lewis has, in truth, rarely been lost to this country. Most men, most politicians especially, fall easily into some ready-made classification; belong to one of the recognised groups of ordinary character. Political life has gone on so long that we have ascertained

[1] *A Dialogue on the Best Form of Government.* By the Right Hon. Sir G. C. Lewis, Bart., M.P. London, 1863.

the principal species of statesmen, and have a fixed name ready for each. But Sir George Lewis, as all who knew him in the least well will testify, did not belong exactly to any received type. People were puzzled how to classify a man who wrote on the Astronomy of the Ancients, the Fables of Babrius, and Roman History *before* there was history, and who was yet able to fill three difficult cabinet offices in quick succession. He wrote what most cabinet ministers would think it too much and too hard to read. No German professor, from the smoke and study of many silent years, has ever put forth books more bristling with recondite references, more exact in every technicality of scholarship, more rich in matured reflection, than Sir George Lewis found time, mind, and scholarlike curiosity, to write in the very thick of eager English life. And yet he was never very busy, or never seemed so. In the extremity of the *Trent* difficulty, when, as he was inclined to think, a war with America was impending, when a war minister might be pardoned for having no time for general reflection, Sir George Lewis found time, at three o'clock on a busy Parliamentary day, to discuss with the writer of these lines, for some twenty minutes, the comparative certainty, or rather *un*certainty, of the physical and moral sciences. It was difficult to know what to make of such a man.

The difficulty was the greater because he made no pretence to be a marvel of versatile ability. When Lord Brougham was chancellor, he was always doing—his enemies said for display, his friends said from a certain overflow of miscellaneous activity—many out-of-the-way matters. According to one legend, he even wrote a treatise on hydrostatics for the Society of Useful Knowledge which was so full of blunders that it could not be published. Many statesmen have had the vanity of variety. But if ever there was a plain man, an unpretending man, a man who in matters of business affected to be *par negotiis neque supra*, that man was Sir George Lewis. The objection to him was that he was too prosaic, too anxiously safe, too suspicious of everything showy. It was not possible for an

enemy or for an opponent—for he had no enemies—to hint that Sir George Lewis's miscellaneous books were written from a love of display. They were written from a bent of nature—from the born love of dry truth.

To those, however, who had an opportunity of accurately observing Sir George Lewis there was no difficulty in making him out. He was so simple and natural that he explained himself. His principal qualities were all of a plain and homely species; and though it may not be possible to give a likeness of them, yet a brief description may easily give an idea and an approximation.

The specialty of his mind was a strong simplicity. He took a plain, obvious view of every subject which came before him. Ingenuities, refinements, and specious fallacies might be suggested around him in any number or in any variety, but his mind was complication-proof. He went steadily through each new ambiguity, each new distinction, as it presented itself. He said, in unadorned but apt English, "The facts are these and these: the new theory concerning them is so and so: it accounts for facts Nos. 1, 2, and 3, but fails to account for facts Nos. 4, 5, and 6". Of course he was not uniformly right. We shall show that there were some kinds of facts, and some sorts of events, which he was by mental constitution not able wholly to appreciate. But his view of every subject, though it might not be adequate, though it might be limited, was always lucid. His mind was like a registering machine with a patent index. It took in all the data, specified, enumerated them, and then indicated with unmistakable precision what their sum-total of effect precisely was. The index might be wrong, though it pretty generally was right; but nobody could ever mistake for a moment what it meant and where it was.

Few men ever kept apart, in civil matters, so well what, in medical matters, would be called the diagnosis and the prescription. Most men mix, even to themselves, their view of what is with their suggestion of what should be. You could not have made Sir George Lewis mix the two. His

mind on such points was almost of a tedious formality. He would say, "The facts proved are so and so; from these there are the following probable inferences. If you wish to alter the present circumstances and to produce others, you must do so and so." When a man came to him with a plan he asked, "What is your object?" Until he got a plain answer to that, and a proof that the object was good, he never looked at the plan. All this in theory may seem very obvious and very trite. Nothing is so easy as to be sensible on paper. The only true theory of transacting business is a simple matter which has been known for hundreds of years. Any part of that theory in print looks stupid and not worth saying. Yet in real life, especially in political life, how few great actors are there! In politics the issues to be determined are for the most part plain and simple; but they are exciting, are embedded in rhetoric, and overlaid with irrelevant matter. A certain strong simplicity sweeps away all these outside matters. Talking to Sir George Lewis on a pending political matter was like reading a chapter of Aristotle's *Politics*—you might think the view incomplete, but there were the same pregnant strength and matter-of-fact simplicity.

One great advantage of this sort of mind Sir George Lewis noted in an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, which, though when published anonymous, may now be quoted as his: "When Demosthenes was asked what was the first and second and third qualification of an orator, he answered, 'Delivery'; in like manner, if we were asked what is the first and second and third qualification of an English statesman, we would answer, 'Intelligibility'. As in oratory the most eloquent words and the wisest counsels will avail but little if they are not impressed by voice and manner upon the minds of an audience: so integrity and public spirit will fail to command confidence, if the course adopted is intricate or inextricable." Sir George Lewis could not have described his own sort of mind better if he had been trying to do so; he *could* not be intricate or perplexed. On those rare occasions in politics when it is useful to be ambiguous he failed. When

he was home secretary he could not diffuse that useful mist over delicate difficulties which was now and then desirable, and in which Sir George Grey has succeeded. An unbroken fluency in indefinite half-truths was simply impossible to Sir George Lewis. He could not be said to fail in it, for he did not attempt it. His mind was unsuited to ambiguity, whether artful or natural. But on those all but universal occasions when only a plain intelligible statement of an important proposition was required, his solid vigour was appropriate. He could never have appealed to the people by the felicitous attraction of his words, but he had an even surer source of popularity in the certain intelligibility of his plans.

The last words of his last book show the sort of grave moderation with which he regarded politics, as wise as any of which he ever made use. They are the judgment in which the reflective man of the world sums up the arguments of the advocates of different forms of government.

"Each one of you, in to-day's discussion, has been able to show specious, perhaps strong, grounds in favour of his opinion. Monarchicus can say with truth that the testimony of experience is in his favour; that the vast majority of nations, now and at all former periods of time, have been governed by monarchs; and that a plural or republican government is an intricate machine, difficult to work, and constantly tending to relapse into monarchy. Aristocraticus can argue that aristocracy is the government of intelligence and virtue; and that it is a just medium between the two extremes of monarchy and democracy; while Democraticus can dwell upon the splendid vision of a community bound together by the ties of fraternity, liberty, and equality, exempt from hereditary privilege, giving all things to merit, and presided over by a Government in which all the national interests are faithfully represented. But even if I were to decide in favour of one of these forms, and against the two others, I should not find myself nearer the solution of the practical problem. A nation does not change the form of its government with the same facility that a man changes his coat. A nation in general only changes the form of its government by means of a violent revolution. This is not a moment when reason is in the ascendant, and when the claims of force can be safely disregarded. The party which is uppermost in the revolution dictates the form of government, and pays little attention to abstract theories, unless it be those which coincide with its own views. The past history of a nation, its present interests, its present passions and antipathies, the advice of favourite leaders, the intervention of foreign Governments, all exercise a powerful influence at such a crisis in deter-

mining the national decision. Such is the rude process by which one form of government is actually converted into another; very unlike the gentle and rational method which is assumed by the constructors of Utopias. Besides, the political preferences of a people are in general determined by habit and mental association; and though the newly introduced constitution may be intrinsically better than its predecessor, yet the people may dislike it, and refuse it the benefit of a fair trial. It may therefore fail not from its own defectiveness, but through the ill-will and reluctance of those by whom it is worked.

"There are some rare cases in which a nation has profited by a revolution. Such was the English revolution of 1688, in which the form of the government underwent no alteration, and the person of the king was alone changed. It was the very minimum of a revolution; it was remarkable for the absence of those accompaniments which make a revolution perilous, and which subsequently draw upon it a vindictive reactionary movement. The late Italian revolution has likewise been successful; by it the Italian people have gained a better government, and have improved their political condition. It was brought about by foreign intervention; but its success has been mainly owing to the moderation of the leaders in whom the people had the wisdom to confide, and who have steadily refrained from all revolutionary excesses.

"The history of forcible attempts to improve Governments is not, however, cheering. Looking back upon the course of revolutionary movements, and upon the character of their consequences, the practical conclusion which I draw is, that it is the part of wisdom and prudence to acquiesce in any form of government which is tolerably well administered, and affords tolerable security to person and property. I would not, indeed, yield to apathetic despair, or acquiesce in the persuasion that a merely tolerable government is incapable of improvement. I would form an individual model, suited to the character, disposition, wants, and circumstances of the country, and I would make all exertions, whether by action or by writing, within the limits of the existing law, for ameliorating its existing condition, and bringing it nearer to the model selected for imitation; but I should consider the problem of the best form of government as purely ideal, and as unconnected with practice; and should abstain from taking a ticket in the lottery of revolution, unless there was a well-founded expectation that it would come out a prize." [1]

This sober simplicity is not to the taste of many people. Many wish to find in politics a sort of excitement. They wish that public affairs should be managed in a rather theatrical way, in order that they themselves may have the pleasure of reading a stimulating series of brilliant events.

[1] *Dialogue on the Best Form of Government.*

People who went to Sir George Lewis for excitement were very likely to be disappointed. He was sure to knock the gloss off things. "People," he would observe, "who know how things are managed, know that the oftener cabinets meet the better. Ignorant persons fancy that when cabinets meet often there is something wrong; but that is a mistake. It is in the long vacation and in the country that some ministers do something brilliant and extraordinary that is much objected to. When ministers get together, they can agree on something plain and satisfactory." He always talked of the cabinet as if it were a homely sort of committee.

At bottom, perhaps, he did not much object to be thought a little commonplace. "In *my* opinion," he said (and perhaps there is no harm in adding that it was in reference to the Suez canal), "in nine cases out of ten, cure is better than prevention. If it be ever necessary to hold Egypt, then fight for Egypt. By looking forward to all possible evils, we waste the strength that had best be concentrated in curing the one evil which happens." Those who wish that the foreign affairs of England should be managed according to a far-seeing and elaborate policy will not like such voluntary shortsightedness; but the English people themselves rather like to have the national course fixed by evident, palpable, and temporary circumstances.

Some people thought Sir George Lewis obstinate, and in one sense he was so. No one was a better colleague; no one, after full discussion, was readier to take a share in the responsibility for measures of which he did not entirely approve the whole. But though he gave up his proposals, he did not alter his opinion. It may be said of him that he could not alter it. Most men's conclusions are framed upon fluctuating considerations, some of which are very indistinctly present to their minds, and most of which it would puzzle them to state shortly. Sir George Lewis knew exactly what were the facts upon which he grounded his opinion, and what his inference from those facts. Unless you gave him new facts, he could not help drawing the same inference. This was one of the comforts of dealing with him. You always

knew exactly where you would find his mind. Unless the data had altered, you might be sure his inference from the data would be unchanged.

It may be added that his inference was almost sure to be exactly sound. His *data* might be limited. As we shall show, there were some kind of facts which, from a limitation of nature, he did not thoroughly appreciate. When such facts were in question, his conclusion was likely enough to be wrong: for he was arguing rightly on incomplete premisses. But no one could gainsay the correctness of his inference from what he did see. He was the soundest judge of probability we have ever known. The facts being admitted to be so and so, what will be the consequence of those facts? Upon this question few judgments, if any, in England were better than that of Sir George Lewis.

It is this judgment of probability which makes the man of business. The data of life accessible; their inference uncertain: a sound judgment on these data is the secret of success to him who possesses it, and the reason why others trust him. It is this that men call a *sound* understanding; it is this that Napoleon had in mind when he said that a man should be *carré à la base.*

To this straightforward simplicity of understanding, Sir George Lewis added the most complete education perhaps of any man of his time. He did not believe in what has been called *speciality;* at least, he confined it to the lower grades of practical life and literary labour. He has observed: "The permanent officers of a department are the depositaries of the official traditions, they are generally referred to by the political head of the office for information upon questions of official practice; and knowledge of this sort acquired in one department would be useless in another. If, for example, the chief clerk of the criminal department of the Home Office were to be transferred to the Foreign Office or to the Admiralty, the special experience which he has acquired in the Home Office, and which is in daily and hourly requisition for the assistance of the home secretary, would be utterly valueless to the foreign secretary or to the first lord of the admiralty. . . . The same

person may be successively at the head of the Home Office, the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office, and the Admiralty; he may be successively president of the Board of Trade and chancellor of the Exchequer; but to transfer an experienced clerk from one office to another would in general be like transferring a skilful naval officer to the army, or appointing a military engineer officer to command a ship of war. A similar distinction may be observed in other branches of practical life; thus an architect may direct the execution of different classes of buildings; he may give plans for palaces, churches, courts of justice, bridges, private dwellings; but the subordinate workmen whom he employs retain their separate functions unchanged —a carpenter does not become a mason, a painter or glazier does not become an ironmonger or plasterer."

He sincerely believed (and perhaps acted to excess on the belief) that a well-educated man was competent to undertake any office and to write on any subject. He would have acknowledged the truth of the saying, that the end of education was to make a good *learner*. He was at the day of his death perhaps the best learner in England; there was no sort of definite information, whether relating to public business or to books, which he did not know how to acquire and where to find. Some public men may know where to find as much political information; some scholars may know where to find as much learned information; but what other men know so precisely the best sources of both kinds of knowledge?

He had a nearly perfect mastery over the keys of knowledge. He derived from Eton and Oxford an excellent knowledge of the classical languages, and he extended it to the day of his death. An article published in *Notes and Queries* within a week or two of that time showed that he had read Mr. Freeman's history—a rather formidable work, relating to the Ætolian and other Greek leagues, which was only then just published, and which is as much as many busy men read in ten years. Many English statesmen have been good classical scholars, and it is happily not difficult for those who have once well learned the languages of antiquity to retain a familiarity with their masterpieces. The very business of life, indeed, adds to these

masterpieces an additional charm, for it reveals touches of discerning thought, and traits of external human knowledge, which the writers learned from experience, and which no one can appreciate without it. Mr. Pitt, Mr. Canning, Lord Grenville, the Marquis Wellesley, and many others of our conspicuous statesmen, have had this sort of scholarship. The knowledge of the classics was to them an intellectual luxury. But Sir George Lewis had a far more laborious scholarship than this. He had read and knew, not only the classical writers themselves, but also terrific German treatises, in many volumes and upon the worst paper, *about* the classics, which no intellectual voluptuary would touch or look at.

In addition to his Eton and Oxford scholarship, Sir George Lewis was excellently well acquainted with modern languages, and had a fair knowledge of mathematics. But a mere enumeration of this kind does not in the least give a notion of the sort of knowledge he had—a phrase, not of the purest English, alone expresses it; it was a knowledge which "turned up" everywhere. Hardly a subject could be started on which he could not throw an unexpected light, and to which he could not add some new fact. The sort of way in which this happened is aptly enough illustrated by Lord Stanhope's *Miscellanies*, published last year: "Mr. Windham," writes Lord Stanhope, "in his speech of December 9, 1803, observes of the Martello towers that they were so called from a place of that name in Corsica; and I have quoted that sentence from him in my *Life of Pitt*. Since my own publication, however, there has been suggested to me, by a very high authority upon all such subjects, a derivation far more probable than Mr. Windham's, and certainly, as I conceive, the right one.—S."

Right Hon. Sir George C. Lewis to Earl Stanhope.

[Extract.] "April 2, 1862.

"The origin of Martello towers I believe to have been that when piracy was common in the Mediterranean, and pirates like the Danes made plundering descents upon the coasts, the Italians built towers near the sea in order to keep watch and give warning if a pirate ship was seen to approach the land. This warning was given by striking on a bell with a hammer; and hence these towers were called *Torri ad Martello*."

The same to the same.

"May 7, 1862.

"I think that I have discovered, with the assistance of a friend, the origin of Windham's statement respecting Martello towers. An attack was made on the tower of Mortella, in Corsica, by the British forces both by sea and land, in February, 1794. The tower was taken after an obstinate defence, but the two attacking ships were beaten off. The circumstance is likely to have given rise to the confusion between Martello towers generally and this tower of Mortella."

And Lord Stanhope adds some additional facts showing that the derivation suggested by Sir George C. Lewis was correct. Again, in p. 40, Lord Stanhope gives an extract from a letter of Sir George Lewis:—

"Lord Grenville told my father that Pitt had formed a plan for abolishing all Customs duties, and that he would have carried it into effect, if the war of the French Revolution had not broken out, which defeated all his financial and commercial schemes. Lord Grenville said that the amount of the public expenditure of that time rendered such a plan quite feasible."

These are two instances casually occurring in one little volume. But any one who knew Sir George Lewis would know that miscellaneous odd facts of this sort were accumulated in his memory, to what seemed an infinite number, and were at once brought out when they could be useful in illustrating anything.

As a writer this great knowledge, especially when connected with the strong love of bare truth which led him to acquire that knowledge, was not advantageous to him. He gave a mistaken credit to his readers; he fancied they loved fact and truth as much as he did. "Woe to the writer," goes a wise saying, "that exhausts his subject; his readers are exhausted first." Sir George Lewis always exhausted his subject if he could, and you could not have persuaded him not to do so. In proposing the dowry of the Princess Royal he amused the House of Commons by an elaborate reference, not only to the dowry of George III.'s daughters, who seemed quite far enough back for an impatient audience that wanted its dinner, but also to a perfectly forgotten Princess Royal who was George III.'s aunt. Most of his books are too full of citations and explanations; and to the last he would have been more

read and more influential if he had thought often of Sydney Smith's precept, "Now, remember Noah, and be *quick*".

But though a tendency to overlay a subject with superfluous erudition was one of Sir George Lewis's defects, the possession of that available erudition was one of his greatest powers. In the present day, the usefulness of a public man is largely measured by the number of subjects which he can get up—Sir George Lewis could get up any subject. There was no probable topic on which he could not form, from the very best sources, with ease and pleasure, a clear, determinate, and exact opinion. His memory helped him. It has been compared to Macaulay's—not that it was equal to such marvellous displays, but that it contained as much, or nearly as much, miscellaneous knowledge. And there was this peculiarity in it. Macaulay's memory, like Niebuhr's, undoubtedly confounded not unfrequently inference and fact; it exaggerated; it gave, not what was in the book, but what a vivid imagination inferred from the book. Sir George Lewis had none of this defect; his memory was a dry memory, just as his mind was a dry light; if he said a thing was at page 10, you might be sure it was at page 10. Somebody called him a "sagacious dictionary," and there was felicity in the expression.

Apart from this massive simplicity of understanding, and this immense accumulation of exact knowledge, there was nothing *very* remarkable in Sir George Lewis. It would be the greatest injustice to his memory, and be the very last thing which he would have desired, to mar the picturesque outlines of his character by concealing its limitations. He had, as we explained, some great qualities in an extraordinary measure, but in other respects he was no more than an ordinary man, and in some he was even less than one.

There was a want of brisk enthusiasm about him, both in appearance and in reality. He looked like a scholar, a thinker, and a man of business; he did not look like—he was not—a buoyant ruler or a popular orator. He was quite conscious of this himself, and would sometimes allude to it. The late Mr. Wilson—a very vivacious and active man—who was secretary of the Treasury when Sir George Lewis was chancellor of the

Exchequer, used to relate that, when he once was urging something rather strongly, Sir George answered: "No; I can't do it. The fact is, Wilson, you are an animal, and I am a vegetable." Taken literally, this would have been a satire on himself, but it indicated his main defect. He had always, or nearly always, sufficient judgment for a great statesman, but he had not always sufficient impulse.

He was *puzzled* about the passions of mankind; he had so little passion himself that it seemed to him an unknown force which might take men to a distance which it was impossible to foresee, and in a direction that could not be calculated. "When," we have heard him say, "you know a man will act for his own interest, you know how to deal with him; but if he is likely to be guided by feeling, it is impossible to predict his course." Such extreme calmness of mind is not favourable to a statesman; it is good to be without vices, but it is not good to be without temptations. It would always have been a difficulty to Sir George Lewis, that he did not share the impetuous part of human nature, whether for good or evil. He was ever liable to impute to a settled design and intellectual self-interest what was in fact owing to an impulse of philanthropy or a gust of mere passion. He was apt to be thought cynical in opinion, though good-natured in manner and action —and in some sense he was so. He took too external a view of human nature, and ascribed to consistent selfishness what was really produced by mixed motives and a close combination of good and evil.

He was so defective in the more conspicuous sorts of imagination, that he was often thought to have no imagination. But this was an error. He could conceive well the working of a polity, the operation of a scheme, the details of a plan. His criticism on the working, say, of the American Constitution, would show great power of conceiving distant causes, and of predicting and analysing strange effects. He had the business imagination. But he had no other. He could not imagine great passions, or overwhelming desires, or involved character; he knew that there were such things, but he had no image of them in his mind and no picture. He was like a man on the

edge of a volcano, who dreaded an eruption, but had no vision of the flames. He was thus apt to be out of sympathy with, and even to be impatient of, some elements in ordinary men's judgment. He was a little too critical of public opinion, too critical, that is, for a Parliamentary statesman, for one who should try to sympathise with the master whom he must obey. Sir George Lewis hated exaggeration as much as he could hate anything—and popular opinion is always exaggerated. "There is," said Sir Stafford Northcote, "no quality for which Sir George Lewis is more remarkable than for a quiet courage, which emboldens him to give utterance from time to time, and sometimes without any apparent necessity for his doing so, to propositions of the most alarmingly unpopular nature." And such courage is admirable. In this day it is much to have a statesman who, on any occasion and for any object, will withstand public opinion. But such opposition should be reserved for great occasions, and too much must not be expected from the mass of men. A vague tendency and loose approximation to what is right is all we can hope for from miscellaneous popular opinion; and it is not wise in a statesman to criticise too nicely, or to attempt to give to the rough practical judgment of men a fine accuracy which it can never in fact possess. Sir George Lewis was the antithesis of a demagogue; he could not take a test without a qualification; he was sure to distrust, and apt to despise, a popular dogma.

A slight survey—and we have only space or powers for a very slight one—will show that these qualities were as conspicuous in Sir George Lewis's writings as in his political career. Indeed, if there ever was a man whose mind was always and everywhere one and the same, Sir George was that man. He had not really a versatile mind, though his pursuits were varied. He was far too modest and wise to aim at what was impossible to him, and nature had given him sharp limitations. It was said by the *Times* of Lord Brougham, "that he might have been any *one* of ten first-rate kinds of men, but that he had tried to be *all* ten, and had failed". Sir George Lewis had none of this flexibility, and none of this vanity. He never tried to be a great poet or a great orator, or to be

anything else but that nature made him—a shrewd and solid thinker. He had a great faculty of research, but his matter is everywhere of the same sort. It is the same imperturbable homely sense upon finance in his Budgets, as upon the Egyptology of Baron Bunsen in his Ancient Astronomy.

Sir George Lewis's principal writings may be divided into two classes, the historical and the speculative; and it is hardly too much to say that the whole of the historical are developments in many forms of one central idea. He always devotes himself to the refutation of an hypothesis: some previous writer has elaborated a theory which, Sir George Lewis maintains, rests on no basis of evidence, and which he wishes to dispel. Some one has seen a *mirage*, and related it as a fact; Sir George Lewis wishes to dispel the *mirage*.

His earliest work of this sort was the *Origin and Formation of the Romance Language*. M. Raynouard, a distinguished French scholar, had expounded a very curious and remarkable theory as to the breaking-up of the Latin language. It is certain that good Latin was once spoken at Rome; it is certain that the Romans conquered the rest of Italy, France, and Spain; it is certain that in each of these countries a modern language analogous to the Latin, and derived from the Latin, is now spoken. How, then, did the Latin break up? How, then, were the new languages formed? M. Raynouard maintained that they were formed by means of an intermediate language. He held that the Romance language, which was purely spoken in the times of the Troubadours, and which is still corruptly spoken in Provence, was a language once used in the same form all over Europe; that it was the same tongue in France, in Portugal, in Italy, and in Spain; and that as a person who spoke Latin would have been universally intelligible at one time, so a person who spoke Romance would have been universally understood at a subsequent time. This idea of a single diffused Middle Age language Sir George Lewis undertakes to dispel; he thinks it a dream and a theory. He says that the Latin broke up under different circumstances, with different velocities, and in different modifications, in the different States of Europe. There was a certain general re-

semblance, he holds, in the changes which were in progress, whether in Italy or Spain, France or Portugal, because those changes in all these countries were produced by the same causes. The invasion of the barbarians, the fall of the Roman Empire, and the somewhat mysterious movement which tends to break up the old rhetorical and synthetic languages, and replace them by analytic and conversational languages, were common causes, operating alike in all countries where Latin had been spoken. But though the change in all the languages was in the same general direction, it was not at the same rate, nor was it identical in details. There has, according to Sir G. Lewis, never been a single vernacular language spoken through Europe since Latin was so spoken. The theory of Raynouard is, according to Sir George Lewis's characteristic language, an "unsupported and imaginary hypothesis".

This essay on the Romance language was republished by Sir George within a few months of his death, and is worth reading as an illustration of his mode of thought and argument. The burden of proof is upon Raynouard. He says there was a common language at a certain date; where, then, is that language? what were its parts of speech, its verbs, its pronouns, and its substantives? Let us look at them in the different countries of Europe at the time in question, and prove that the language was uniform by the identity of its forms. Accordingly, Sir George Lewis goes through the earliest known forms of the Italian, Spanish, Provençal, and French languages, and he shows that at the earliest stage they were *not* identical. He characteristically says, "The importance and interest of the philological problem which is treated in the following pages are much increased by the fact that it lies entirely within the historical period; and that not only the original and the derivative languages, but also the circumstances attending the transition, are known by authentic evidence and by an unbroken tradition. It is therefore a problem which admits of solution by demonstrative arguments, and without recourse to a series of hypotheses and conjectures, weakening as the chain lengthens." Sir George Lewis revels, we may almost say, in the plentifulness of the evidence. He has lists of the "tenses

and inflections of Romance nouns," "new Romance nouns formed by affixes," of the degrees of comparison, pronouns, and numerals, in the Romance language, with endless similar information. He elaborately compares the earliest stages of the Italian, Spanish, and French languages with the earliest form of the Provençal; and he shows clearly and fully, what was probable enough in itself, that the earliest forms of these languages differ; that they have pursued a different history; that the Provençal is only one of the derived languages, with a history of its own; that there never was any one derived language generally diffused through Europe; that as soon as the use of Latin ended, distinctions of speech began. A very close political observer, who did not himself easily relinquish anything, once described Sir George Lewis as the most pertinacious man he had ever known. "He returns," it was added, "to the charge again and again, and he hardly ever fails." This was said by one who seldom read anything, who had read very little of Sir George Lewis's writing, who assuredly had never opened the treatise on the Romance language. But if he had studied the treatise, he could not have described it better. Sir George returns again and again, with verbs and pronouns, to the charge, and he hardly ever fails. A student who continued to believe Raynouard's theory must be impervious to argument and detail-proof.

The largest of all Sir George Lewis's writings, and his acutest, strikes with the same tactics at a nobler game upon a larger field. The reception of Niebuhr's *History of Rome* is one of the most curious of recent literary phenomena. Though he really is a bold theorist on Roman history, though his narrative is by admission constructed by the imagination, he has obtained something like the credit due to an almost contemporary authority—to a person who had some special information. He believed he had acquired, by long study and brooding, a special faculty, a peculiar divination. He tells us :—

"All my faculties were directed to a single object for sixteen months, without any intermission except now and then for a few days. My sight grew dim in its passionate efforts to pierce into the obscurity of the sub-

ject; and unless I was to send forth an incomplete work, which sooner or later would have had to be wholly remodelled, I was compelled to wait for what Time might gradually bring forth. Nor has he been niggardly, but, though slowly, has granted me one discovery after another. . . .[1]

"The true account, it must be owned, is not always the most probable. But when an inquirer, after gazing for years with ever-renewed undeviating steadfastness, sees the history of mistaken, misrepresented, and forgotten events rise out of mists and darkness, and assume substance and shape, as the scarcely visible aerial form of the nymph in the Sclavonic tale takes the body of an earthly maiden beneath the yearning gaze of love—when by unwearied and conscientious examination he is continually gaining a clearer insight into the connection of all its parts, and discerns that immediate expression of reality which emanates from life—he has a right to demand that others, who merely throw their looks by the way on the region where he lives and has taken up his home, should not deny the correctness of his views, because they perceive nothing of the kind. The learned naturalist, who has never left his native town, will not recognise the animal's track, by which the hunter is guided: and if any one, on going into Benvenuto's prison, when his eyes had for months been accustomed to see the objects around him, and asserted that Benvenuto like himself could not distinguish anything in the darkness, he would surely have been somewhat presumptuous."[2]

It is beautiful to see the heavy care and sluggish diligence with which Sir George Lewis reckons all his poetry back into mere prose.

"The history of Niebuhr" (he tells us) "has thus opened more questions than it has closed, and it has set in motion a large body of combatants, whose mutual variances are not at present likely to be settled by deference to a common authority, or by the recognition of any common principle.

"The main cause of the great multiplicity and wide divergence of opinions, which characterise the recent researches into early Roman history, is the defective method, which not only Niebuhr and his followers, but most of his opponents, have adopted. Instead of employing those tests of credibility which are consistently applied to modern history, they attempt to guide their judgment by the indications of internal evidence, and assume that the truth can be discovered by an occult faculty of historical divination. Hence, the task which they have undertaken resembles an inquiry into the internal structure of the earth, or into the question, whether the stars are inhabited. It is an attempt to solve a problem, for the solution of which no sufficient data exist.

"The consequence is, that ingenuity and labour can produce nothing

[1] Preface to vol. ii. [2] Introductory section of vol. ii.

but hypotheses and conjectures, which may be supported by analogies, and may sometimes appear specious and attractive, but can never rest on the solid foundation of proof. There will, therefore, be a series of such conjectural histories; each successive writer will reject all or some of the guesses of his predecessors, and will propose some new hypotheses of his own. But the treatment of early Roman history, though it will be constantly moving, will not advance; it will not be stationary, but neither will it be progressive; it will be unfixed and changeable, but without receiving any improvement; and it will perpetually revolve in the same hopeless circle. Like the search after the philosopher's stone, or the elixir of life, it will be constantly varying its aspect, under the treatment of different professors of the futile science; but truth and certainty, the aim of all rational employment of the intellect, will always be equally distant. Each new system of the early Roman Constitution will be only (to use Paley's words) one guess among many; whereas he alone discovers who proves. There is indeed no doubt that long habit, combined with a happy talent, may enable a person to discern the truth where it is invisible to ordinary minds, possessing no peculiar advantages. This may be observed, not only in historical researches, but in every other department of knowledge. In order, however, that the truth so perceived should recommend itself to the convictions of others, it is a necessary condition that it should admit of proof which they can understand. Newton might have perceived, by a rapid and intuitive sagacity, the connection between the fall of an apple and the attraction of the earth to the sun; but unless he could have demonstrated that connection by arguments which were intelligible and satisfactory to the scientific world, his discovery would have been useless, except as a mere suggestion. In like manner, we may rejoice that the ingenuity and learning of Niebuhr should have enabled him to advance many novel hypotheses and conjectures respecting events in the early history, and respecting the form of the early constitution, of Rome. But unless he can support those hypotheses by sufficient evidence, they are not entitled to our belief. It is not enough for a historian to claim the possession of a retrospective second-sight, which is denied to the rest of the world; of a mysterious doctrine, revealed only to the initiated. Unless he can prove as well as guess; unless he can produce evidence of the fact, after he has intuitively perceived its existence, his historical system cannot be received. The oases of truth which he discerns amidst the trackless expanses of fiction and legend, may be real; but until their existence can be verified by positive testimony, we have no certainty that these 'green spots in memory's waste' may not be mere mirage and optical delusion. It is an excellence in a historian of antiquity, who has sufficient data to proceed upon, that he should form a vivid conception of the events described; that he should live as it were among the persons whose acts he recounts; and that he should carry his reader back into the bygone times

in which his drama is placed. On the other hand, it is a fault in the modern writers who first narrated Roman history that they should have related the events as if they had never happened. But when there is a want of solid evidence, we do not render the history true by treating the events as if they were real."[1]

Almost the whole of Sir George Lewis's two volumes are an expansion and development of this passage. He turns Niebuhr's revelations into fancies, and his divinations into mere guesses. Since Sir George Lewis's work on Roman history, no English scholar at least has ventured to defend Niebuhr's essentially arbitrary treatment of legendary history. A historian, it is now agreed, cannot accept one legend because it suits a preconceived hypothesis, and reject another because it is inconsistent with that hypothesis. He must take both or must reject both. We have not attained and perhaps may not attain to a complete and accepted theory of the value of traditional evidence; there are many points on that subject which require much more delicate handling than they have received. But no one will ever revive Niebuhr's notion of an occult tact. A long acquaintance and a familiar meditation upon any sort of *truth*, does indeed give an instinctive sense with respect to that truth. A constant habit of comparing accurate truth with legendary versions of the same truth, would really give a student a verified knowledge, and even a quick instinctive idea as to what sort of inventions popular tradition is prone. But Niebuhr had studied legends as to times of which there are only legends; he had not compared truth with fiction, but fiction with fiction. He had not acquired a test of truth by a contact with truth, but his hot brain had brooded so long on a favourite subject that he mistook its own fancies for realities. Sir George Lewis did not mistake them.

It is sometimes said that Sir George Lewis would accept no fact of which there was not contemporary evidence, and that he set no value whatever upon any tradition in any case. But this is a mischievous exaggeration. Sir George Lewis was not the most exacting of historical critics. He con-

[1] Chap. i., § 4.

sidered Polybius as too strict and sceptical. Polybius thought that a historian without books, and with only oral information, could not be sure of events more than twenty years before his own birth. Sir George Lewis held that a sort of memory of leading events, accurate in substance though probably inaccurate in detail, might be preserved by tradition for about a hundred years, and that special events from special circumstances might be remembered longer; but that, in such cases, it was only the general outline which could be faintly traced, and only events of interest that would be preserved. After about a hundred years—after the period about which a man could hear from his grandfather—he thought, for the most part, there was no reliable knowledge.

Sir George Lewis's *Ancient Astronomy* might seem a deviation from his general studies. Astronomy is a physical science, and Sir George, though well enough acquainted with such sciences, did not profess to have made them a special study. He was often enough heard to say, half in jest but still with a certain meaning, "On matters of practical interest the physical sciences are less certain than the moral: as long as you are dealing with abstractions, with perfectly elastic beams and a world without friction, physical science is quite certain; but as soon as you introduce the actual conditions of life, and talk of the real world in which we live, most physical sciences become as uncertain as any moral science. Take, for example, physic. If you will question your medical man, you will find that, if he cures you, it will not be by the goodness of his *arguments*. A great deal of what is set down upon that subject in grave treatises appears to me to be inconsistent rubbish. And my experience at the War Office shows me that scientific evidence may be accumulated in almost any quantity for any given invention and against any given invention." A man who talked in this spirit was scarcely likely to devote many hours out of the scanty leisure of English public life to the history of physical science. Nor was Sir George Lewis attracted to the subject by its abstract scientific interest. He is at great pains to explain that he makes no pretension to such abstract mathematical know-

ledge as was possessed by Delambre and others, his predecessors, and that astronomy is conversant with obvious realities which have always excited human curiosity. In truth, he encountered ancient astronomy in his investigations of ancient history. He found may pretensions to ancient scientific knowledge which it was much in his way to scrutinise and disbelieve; he was in all his inquiries compelled to deal with ancient chronology, which is not to be understood except with reference to the astronomical notions of those who framed it. Such questions as, "Was there a Roman year of ten months?" met him at every step. He was thus led to write a clear, compendious, and popular account of the rise of astronomical science in ancient Greece. It is not exhaustive, as most of his treatises are exhaustive; it is not, like his other treatises, supported by an available accumulation of all appropriate knowledge, for he was in some places cramped by the deficiency of his mathematics. It is not, therefore, one of the works on which his fame as a great scholar will hereafter rest. But it is a very clear, sensible, and interesting account of the interesting subject to which it relates.

Bound up with the *History of Ancient Astronomy*, and having but a very slender relation to it, are three essays: one on the *Early History and Chronology of the Egyptians;* another on the *Early History and Chronology of the Assyrians;* and a third on the *Navigation of the Phœnicians.* Here Sir George Lewis is all himself, dealing with the subjects which he liked best, and dealing with them as he liked best. Anybody who wishes to know the sort of mind he had may read—and it is not unamusing reading—his criticism on the Egyptian History of Baron Bunsen. At the risk of tediousness we will condense a little of it:—

"The principal manipulator" (says Sir George Lewis) "of the ancient Egyptian chronology is Baron Bunsen, who, in his recent work on Egypt, has avowedly applied the method of Niebuhr to Egyptian antiquity. Now the method with which Niebuhr treated the early history of Rome was to reject the historical narrative handed down by ancient, and generally received by modern writers; and to substitute for it a new narrative reconstructed on an arbitrary hypothetical basis of his own. Everything that is original and peculiar in Niebuhr's historical method, and in its results,

is indeed unsound. But it possessed advantages, when employed in the transmutation of Roman antiquity, which are wanting to it when applied to Egyptian antiquity. The early Roman history, whatever may be its authenticity, presents at least a full and continuous narrative, most parts of which are related in discordant versions by different classical writers. As not one of these versions rests on an ascertained foundation, or can be traced to coeval attestation, great facility is afforded for ingenious conjecture, for bold and startling combinations, for hypothetical reconstruction by means of specious analogies, and for the display of imposing paradox and dazzling erudition. But the so-called history of ancient Egypt consists of little more than chronology. It is, for the most part, merely a string of royal names. Now this is a most unattractive field for the hypothetical historian; he is condemned to make bricks without straw. Instead of demolishing and rebuilding constitutions, instead of creating new states of society out of obscure fragments of lost writers, he is reduced to a mere arithmetical process. Accordingly, the operations of Bunsen and other modern critics upon the ancient history of Egypt rather resemble the manipulation of the balance-sheet of an insolvent company by a dexterous accountant (who, by transfers of capital to income, by suppression or the transposition of items, and by the alteration of bad into good debts, can convert a deficiency into a surplus), than the conjectures of a speculative historian who undertakes to transmute legend into history.

"Egyptology has a historical method of its own. It recognises none of the ordinary rules of evidence; the extent of its demands upon our credulity is almost unbounded. Even the writers on ancient Italian ethnology are modest and tame in their hypotheses, compared with the Egyptologists. Under their potent logic all identity disappears; everything is subject to become anything but itself. Successive dynasties become contemporary dynasties; one king becomes another king, or several other kings, or a fraction of another king; one name becomes another name; one number becomes another number; one place becomes another place.

"In order to support and illustrate these remarks, it would be necessary to analyse Bunsen's reconstruction of the scheme of Egyptian chronology. Such an analysis would be inconsistent with the main object of the present work; but a few examples will serve to characterise his method.

"Sesostris is the great name of Egyptian antiquity. Even the builders of the pyramids and of the labyrinth sink into insignificance by the side of this mighty conqueror. Nevertheless, his historical identity is not proof against the dissolving and recompounding processes of the Egyptological method. Bunsen distributes him into portions, and identifies each portion with a different king. Sesostris, as we have already stated, stands in Manetho's list as third king of the twelfth dynasty, at 3320 B.C., and a notice is appended to his name clearly identifying him with the Sesostris of Herodotus. Bunsen first takes a portion of him, and identifies it with Tosorthrus (written Sesorthus by Eusebius), the second king of the third

dynasty, whose date is 5119 B.C., being a difference in the dates of 1799 years—about the same interval as between Augustus Cæsar and Napoleon; he then takes another portion, and identifies it with Sesonchosis, a king of the twelfth dynasty; a third portion of Sesostris is finally assigned to himself. It seems that these three fragments make up the entire Sesostris; who, in this plural unity, belongs to the Ancient Empire; but it is added that the Greeks confound him with Ramesses, or Ramses, of the New Empire, a king of the nineteenth dynasty, whose date is 1255 B.C.; who, again, was confounded with his father, Sethos, which name again was transmuted into Sethosis and Sesosis.

"Lepsius agrees with Bunsen that Sesostris in the Manethonian list, who stands in the twelfth dynasty, at 3320 B.C., is not Sesostris; but, instead of elevating him to the third dynasty, brings him down to the nineteenth dynasty, and identifies him with Sethos, 1326 B.C.; chiefly on account of a statement of Manetho, preserved by Josephus, that Sethos first subjugated Cyprus and Phœnicia, and afterwards Assyria and Media, with other countries further to the east. Lepsius, moreover, holds that Ramses, the son of Sethos, was, like his father, a great conqueror, but that the Greeks confounded both father and son under the name of Sesostris.

"We therefore see that the two leading Egyptologists, Bunsen and Lepsius, differing in other respects, agree in thinking that Sesostris is not Sesostris. The notice appended to his name in Manetho, which identifies him with the Sesostris of Herodotus, Diodorus, and other Greek writers, is regarded by Lepsius as spurious. But here their agreement stops. One assigns Sesostris to what is called the Old, the other to what is called the New Empire, separating his respective dates by an interval of 3793 years. What should we think, if a new school of writers on the history of France, entitling themselves Francologists, were to arise, in which one of the leading critics were to deny that Louis XIV. lived in the seventeenth century, and were to identify him with Hercules, or Romulus, or Cyrus, or Alexander the Great, or Cæsar, or Charlemagne; while another leading critic of the same school, agreeing in the rejection of the received hypothesis as to his being the successor of Louis XIII., were to identify him with Napoleon I. and Louis Napoleon?"[1]

It is well known that all these conjectures on Early Egyptian history are supported by the recent discovery of the true meaning of the long-unintelligible hieroglyphic inscriptions. But Sir George Lewis does not believe they have discovered their meaning. He states the problem certainly with formidable force. It is something like this: "Here you have inscriptions composed in a lost *language*, and written down in a *character* which is also lost. Is it to be believed that the imagination of

[1] Chap. vi., § 11.

man can first guess rightly the system of written symbols, and then guess the meaning too? It is the old story; you have to interpret the dream without knowing what it is. Even supposing that you have found out, as you think, one set of written symbols, and made a language in these symbols which you can read, who will assure us that some other person will not find another set of symbols with another set of meanings in a new imaginary language?"

"The question," says Sir George Lewis, "as to the possibility of interpreting a language whose tradition has been lost, is further confused by a deceptive analogy derived from the process of deciphering. A cipher is a contrivance for disguising the alphabetical writing of a known language by a conventional change of characters. The explanation of this conventional change is called the *Key*. If a document written in cipher falls into the possession of a stranger ignorant of the Key, and if he can conjecture with tolerable certainty the language in which it is written, he can proceed to apply to it the rules for deciphering, which are founded upon the comparative frequency of certain letters and certain words in the given language. This process, if the document be tolerably long, is almost infallible. It is difficult to devise a cipher, sufficiently simple for frequent use, which cannot be deciphered by a skilful and experienced decipherer. But this operation supposes the language to be understood; it is a merely alphabetical process; it does not determine the meaning of a single word; it merely strips the disguise off a word, and reproduces it in its ordinary orthography. No process similar to deciphering can afford the smallest assistance towards discovering the signification of an unknown word, written in known alphabetical characters. The united ingenuity of the most skilful decipherers in Europe could not throw any light upon an Etruscan or Lycian inscription, or interpret a single sentence of the Eugubine Tables. In like manner, assuming an Egyptian hieroglyphical text to be correctly read into alphabetical characters, no process of deciphering could detect the meaning of the several words."[1]

It is possible, for example, that Champollion may have discovered, by comparison of some proper names, some phonetic characters, and it is also possible that the ancient Egyptian may have had some analogy with the modern Coptic—the same sort of analogy, perhaps, which Italian bears to Latin. But it is very difficult to be satisfied that any great knowledge could be derived from the spelling of a

[1] Chap. vi., § 13.

few letters, and the guessing of a few words as expressed in these letters.

"Where," says Sir George Lewis, "the tradition of a language is lost, but its affinity with a known language is ascertained or presumed, the attempts to restore the significations of words proceed upon the hypothesis that the etymology of the word can be determined by its resemblance, more or less close, to a word in the known language, and that the etymology of the word is a certain guide to its meaning. But although there is a close affinity between etymology and meaning, yet etymology alone cannot be taken as a sure index to meaning. When the signification of a word is ascertained, it is often difficult to determine the etymology. The Lexilogus of Buttmann, the Romance Dictionary of Diez —in fact, any good etymological vocabulary—will furnish ample evidence of this truth. But when the process is inverted, and it is proposed to determine the signification of the words of an entire language from etymological guesses, unassisted by any other knowledge, the process is necessarily uncertain and inconclusive, and can be satisfactory only to a person who has already made up his mind to accept *some* system of interpretation.

"Thus in Italian the word *troja* signifies a sow. Diez refers the origin of this word to the old Latin expression *porcus Trojanus*, which meant a pig stuffed with other animals and served for the table; the name being an allusion to the Trojan horse. He conceives that this phrase first became *porco di troja*, and afterwards *troja* simply, with the signification of a pregnant sow. Assuming this etymology to be true, what possible ingenuity could have enabled anybody to invert the process, and to discover the meaning by the etymology, if the meaning were unknown?"[1]

The alphabet of Baron Bunsen is very complicated. He has four classes and an extra or later class. He has more than 1000 characters altogether:—

Ideographics	620
Determinatives	164
Phonetics	130
Mixed	55
Later alphabet	100
	1069

And he can read a very large number of words; but we are not surprised to hear that "the system of reading the hieroglyphic characters as expounded by the Egyptologists, is flexible and arbitrary. It involves the hypothesis of homo-

[1] Chap. vi., § 13.

phones; that is to say, of a plurality of signs for the same sound. It likewise involves a mixture of ideographic and phonetic symbols."[1]

Altogether, though Sir George Lewis may not be right in his bold assertion that *no* early Egyptian history is possible, he is clearly successful in proving that Baron Bunsen's history is untrue. As he expelled the conjectures of Niebuhr from Roman history, so he has expelled the conjectures of Niebuhr's great pupil from Egyptian history. Nobody who reads Sir George Lewis can doubt that Bunsen, for the most part, indulges in conjecture as to the language, as to the written character, and as to the history of ancient Egypt. *His* theories in future will not be accepted as facts. A better feat of iconoclasm has seldom been performed.

These historical works might well have exhausted the leisure of a man almost always occupied in civil business. But Sir George Lewis wrote another long series of books on philosophical politics also. We have not left ourselves much space to speak of them at length, and we do not think that they need be spoken of at such great length as his historical works. We think that they represent less perfectly the best parts of his mind, and that they bear more marks of his deficiencies.

The earliest and among the most curious is an essay *On the Use and Abuse of certain Political Terms*, published in 1832. It is curiously characteristic of Sir George Lewis that, at a time when England was convulsed by the almost revolutionary struggle of the Reform Bill, when all Europe still gazed with wonder at the prosperous effect of the most happy of French revolutions, Sir George Lewis should have sat down to write, not on the facts of political revolution, but on the *words* of political science. After he became a practical statesman he became more alive to political passions and less occupied with political terms; but to the last he was too apt to wonder at great conflicts, and to be pleased with verbal inquiries. In 1833 he was under the mastery of a remarkable teacher. The late Mr. Austin had little fame in his lifetime,

[1] Chap. vi., § 13.

and was so discouraged by neglect that he could not nerve himself to complete great works, of which he had finished what most men would consider the difficult part, and had only to add that which most people would think the easy part. He in this point resembled Coleridge. That great thinker has left no work which embodies his philosophy, and yet his philosophy has permeated his generation. Mr. Austin seized hold, some thirty years ago, of several strong minds, and by the help of these great minds he greatly influenced his time. You will find thoughts distinctly traceable to him far away among people who never heard of him. His few lectures and his years of conversation were a peculiar source of nice expression and accurate thought for more than half a century; a little bit of just though almost pedantic thought cropped suddenly up in our crude and hasty English life. Thirty years ago Mr. Austin, at the London University, explained what may be called the necessary part of political science, and illustrated it by the best of all illustrations—Roman law. He analysed not a particular Government, but what is common to all Governments; not one law, but what is common to all laws; not political communities in their features of diversity, but political communities in their features of necessary resemblance. He gave politics not an interesting aspect, but a new aspect; for by giving men a steady view of what political communities *must* be, he nipped in the bud many questions as to what they ought to be, or ought not to be. As a gymnastic of the intellect, and as a purifier, Mr. Austin's philosophy is to this day admirable—even in its imperfect remains; a young man who will study it will find that he has gained something which he wanted, but something which he did not *know* that he wanted; he has clarified a part of his mind which he did not know needed clarifying. Sir George Lewis was deeply penetrated by this abstract teaching; to the last day of his life, in the unphilosophical atmosphere of the War Office, he would use the phrases of, and would like allusions to, this philosophy. One source of his power as a political thinker was, that he had, under Mr. Austin's guidance, studied political questions as it were in their skeleton.

Once a jurist, always a jurist. The vast and easy command of the whole sources of judicial literature which Sir George Lewis showed in his essay *On Foreign Jurisdiction, and the Extradition of Criminals*, and elsewhere, is largely due to his early studies. Yet it may be doubted whether Mr. Austin's influence was entirely favourable for him. A certain school of thinkers magnify the effects of human language. Calm and simple-minded students, when they see the hasty world of human beings using inaccurate and vague words, are apt to ascribe all their errors to those words, and to believe that, if you could put human language right, you would set the world in order. There is no greater mistake. Men are mainly deceived by their passions and their interests; they care but little for abstract truth, and rush forward to small, petty, but concrete, objects. They catch hastily at any sort of word that justifies what they wish to do, and if it sounds well, care little for fallacies and ambiguities. The language is inaccurate, no doubt, but it is a symptom only of a mental disease. You cannot calm the passions of men by defining their words. Mr. Austin's school was apt to forget this. The early treatise of Sir George Lewis *On the Use and Abuse of Political Terms*, and some of his later treatises too, are not exempt from this defect, though his strong sense and really practical turn of mind always kept it in check. A person wishing to watch his intellectual history should look carefully at this book; it is a series of exercises in Mr. Austin's class-room.

A more serious defect mars the popularity of Sir George Lewis's writings, and we think Mr. Austin is partly to blame for that too. Mr. Austin was always talking of the "formidable community of fools"; he had no popularity; little wish for popularity; little respect for popular judgment. This is a great error. The world is often wiser than any philosopher. "There is some one," said a great man of the world, "wiser than Voltaire, and wiser than Napoleon, *c'est tout le monde*." Popular judgment on popular matters is crude and vague, but it is right. And it is even more certain that a great writer on morals and politics ought not to adopt a mode of writing which excludes him from popularity. Mr. Austin's mere style did

this for him. He wrote on the principle that people would be sure to comprehend what was completely expressed, but could never be trusted to supply a hiatus in what was incompletely expressed. His writings accordingly read like a legal document; every possible case is provided for, every ambiguity is guarded against, and—hardly any one can read them. The ordinary human mind cannot bear that method of expressing everything; it is more puzzled by such elaborate precision than by anything else. Sir George Lewis did not err in mere language, but he erred in treatment. Mr. Austin expands all thoughts, new and old, at just the same length; and he taught Sir George Lewis to do so also. In the present state of the moral sciences, this is absurd. Much of them is very well, though a little vaguely, understood by the world at large. It is often of great consequence to reduce them to a principle; it is often of great importance to add new truths, and to give a new edge to old truth. But it is not advisable to begin with a principle and to work steadily through all its possible applications at the *same* length. If you do, the reader will say, "How this man *does* prose! why, I knew that"; and he did know it. Some of the applications of a principle are new, and should be treated at length; some are of pressing importance, and should be treated at length too; but all the consequences should not be worked out like a sum. An atmosphere of commonplace hangs over long moral didactics, and an equal expansion of what the world knows and what it does not know will not be read by the world.

Sir George Lewis did his fame serious harm by neglecting this maxim. He wrote, for example, *An Essay on the Influence of Authority in Matters of Opinion*, which was described by a hasty thinker as a book to prove that when "you wanted to know anything, you asked some one who knew something about it". This essay certainly abounds in acute remarks and interesting illustrations; and if these remarks and these illustrations had been printed separately, it would have been a good book. But the systematic treatment has been fatal to it. The different kinds and cases of authority are so systematically enumerated, that the reader yawns and forgets.

The case is even worse with his great treatise *On the Methods of Observation and Reasoning in Politics*, in two large volumes. Scarcely any one has read these volumes, and those who have are sure that their bulk was a mistake. They are written upon the principle that "two and two make four" is as much unknown to the mass of men as the integral calculus. Easy things are explained exactly with the same care as difficult things, and in consequence very few people read the explanations. There are many admirable parts and essays in the book. It contains an account and criticism of "political induction" as described by Mr. Mill, and an account and criticism of jurisprudence as described and understood by Mr. Austin. Both these discussions are very good, and the speculations of the two thinkers are well spliced together; but they are overlaid with long explanations of what requires no explanation, and discussions of what need never have been discussed. Charles Fox used to say of a very dull but able speaker, "I always listen to that man, and then speak his speech over again". A dishonest writer might well do so with Sir George Lewis's writings. There are many thoughts, and a million facts in them, which the world would be glad to hear, though it cannot extract them from the rest. A writer of this sort naturally did not look for profit from his laborious writings; few men have done more gratuitous work. He was disposed to agree with Mr. Mill, that the notion of "thinkers giving out doctrines for bread was a mistake," and even to hold that speculators should *pay* for the opportunity of placing their opinions before the world.

We own that we much regret this misconception of the conditions of modern writing, now that Sir George Lewis's career has been cut short in the midst. When he had life before him, it seemed less important that he should throw away fame; but now that all is over, we wish he had desired popularity more, for he would have been remembered better. He really had considerable powers of pointed writing. The little treatise at the head of this article shows that when he did not aim at completeness he could write easily that which would be easily read. He had not, indeed, the powers of a

great literary artist; it was not in his way to look at style as an alluring art. He wanted to express his opinion, and cared for nothing else. He had no literary vanity; and without the vanity that loves applause, few indeed cultivate the tact that gains applause. "If you can do without the world," says the cynic, "the world can do without you;" and it is as true to say that few, if any, gain literary fame who do not long and hunger after it.

As a sort of compensation, Sir George Lewis rose more rapidly as a Parliamentary statesman than any of his contemporaries. He was in the first rank of the Liberal party, yet he entered Parliament five years after Mr. Cardwell, fifteen years after Mr. Gladstone, nineteen years after Sir Charles Wood, and forty years after Lord Palmerston. It is curious at first sight that he should have done so. He was not an attractive speaker, he wanted animal spirits, and detested an approach to anything theatrical. He had very considerable command of exact language, but he had no impulse to use it. If it was his duty to speak, he spoke; but he did not want to speak when it was not his duty. Silence was no pain, and oratory no pleasure to him. If mere speaking were the main qualification for an influence in Parliament—if, as is often said, Parliamentary government be a synonym for the government of talkers and *avocats*—Sir George Lewis would have had no influence, would never have been a Parliamentary ruler. Yet we once heard a close and good observer say: "George Lewis's influence in the House is something wonderful: whatever he proposes has an excellent chance of being carried. He excites no opposition, and he commands great respect, and generally he carries his plan." The House of Commons, according to the saying, is wiser than any one in it. There is an elective affinity for solid sense in a practical assembly of educated Englishmen which always operates, and which rarely errs. Sir George Lewis's influence was great, not only on his own side of the House, but on the other. He had, indeed, probably more real weight with moderate Conservatives than with extreme Liberals. Enterprise neither seemed to be nor was his forte, and bold men thought him rather tame. His influence was like that of Lord

Palmerston: he was liked by the moderate members, whether Whigs or Tories, who think just alike, whatever they call themselves; and who are likely nowadays to rule the country, whatever name the party in power may chance to bear. He was a safe man, a fair man, and an unselfish man. He had a faculty of "patient labour," which, as he himself remarked, "*was as sure* to be appreciated, when Englishmen meet together to transact business, as wit or eloquence"; and therefore it was that he had great influence in the House of Commons; and therefore it was that he rose rapidly.

He filled three cabinet offices; the first was that of chancellor of the exchequer, and this was the one which he liked best, and for which he conceived himself best qualified. He had no easy time, however, during his actual tenure of the office. He had to find money for the Crimean War, the heaviest draft on the resources of the exchequer since Waterloo; he had to break the "fundamental law of the currency," as he called it, Peel's Act, in the unexpected panic of 1857. He gave universal satisfaction as finance minister, and especial satisfaction in the City. He was clear, considerate, and it was at once felt that argument would move him if good argument could be found. He had to borrow much money, and he so managed as to be able to borrow it without undue charge to the State, and with that immediate success which sustains the credit of the State, and secures a *prestige* in the money-market. It is scarcely possible to speak of him as finance minister without alluding to his differences with Mr. Gladstone in the cabinet and out of it. Yet it is not possible to discuss the subject accurately. Mr. Gladstone's views of the Budget of 1860, we all know; but Sir George Lewis's views have never been set forth at length, and it is not wise to base an argument on scraps of oral conversations. It may be as well, however, to point out that, in addition to their intrinsic and considerable differences of temperament and character, they approached finance from two different and even opposite points of view. Mr. Gladstone is the successor, the legitimate inheritor of the policy of Sir Robert Peel. He made his reputation as a financier and as a statesman by the Budget of 1853, in which the prominent object

is to remove old taxes that cramp and harass industry. He regards the public purse as donative, out of which trade may be augmented and industry developed. Sir Robert Peel used the public purse in that manner, and Mr. Gladstone has done so also. Sir George Lewis was led, perhaps from temperament, and certainly from circumstances, to take a stricter and simpler view of finance. He came into office on a sudden, during a great war, and he had to find the resources for that war. He had to consider, not how taxation could be adjusted so as to help trade, but how the exchequer could be filled to pay soldiers. On all financial matters he looked solely at the balance of the account, Will there be a deficit, or will there not be? Forms of account, and all minor matters were in his mind of very small importance; he looked to the simple question, How much will there be in the till at the end of the year? With two such different prepossessions as these, it is no wonder that men so intrinsically different as Sir George Lewis and Mr. Gladstone did not very well agree upon finance; it is rather a wonder that they could act together at all. There is no use, over Sir George Lewis's grave, in reviving financial controversies; everybody will now admit that while he was in office and responsible, he was a sound and sure chancellor of the exchequer.

In the panic of 1857, we have heard, he was even amusing. His perfect impassivity and collectedness contrasted much with the excitement of eager men, and in a panic most men are eager. A deputation of Scotch bankers attended at the Treasury to ask Sir George to induce the Bank of England to make advances to them in certain possible cases. Sir George said, "Ah, gentlemen, if I were to interfere with the discretion of the Bank, there would be a run upon me much greater than any which there has ever been upon you". He was a man who probably *could* not lose his head.

At the Home Office he had the opportunity of displaying great judicial faculties. The Home Office is the high court of appeal in cases of criminal justice. When any one is to be hanged, it is almost always argued before the Home Secretary that he should not be hanged. If Sir George Lewis had practised at the bar, for which he studied, he would have been

a bad advocate; his mind was not fertile in ambiguous fallacies, and was incapable of artificial belief; and a great pleader should excel in these. One of the greatest judges of our generation, when at the bar, could only state the point once, and when the court did not understand him, could only mutter, "What fools they are! awful fools! infernal fools!" Sir George Lewis would not have indulged in these epithets, but he would have been nearly as little able to invent ingenious suggestions and out-of-the-way arguments. He probably would have said, "I have explained the matter. If the court *will* not comprehend it, *I* cannot make them." But no man was fitter for a judge than himself. He would never have shirked labour—which is not unknown even among judges—and his lucid exposition of substantial reasons would have been consulted by students for years. At the Home Office he could not display all these qualities, but he was able to display some of them.

At the War Office he shone far less. It did not suit his previous pursuits; and no other man with such pursuits would have taken it, or, indeed, would have been asked to take it. He pushed the notion too far in this case, that an able and educated man can master any subject, and is fit for any office. The constitutional habit in England of making a civilian supreme over military matters, though we believe a most wise habit, has its objections, and may easily look absurd. It *did* look rather absurd when the most pacific of the pacific, the most erudite of the erudite, Sir George Lewis, was placed at the head of the War Department. In great matters, it cannot be denied, he did well. When the capture of the *Trent* made a war with the Federal States a pressing probability, the arrangements were admitted to be admirable. Much of the credit must belong in such a case to military and other subordinates —all the details must be managed by them; but the superior minister must have his credit too. He brought to a focus all which was done; he summed up the whole; he could say distinctly why everything which was done was done, and why everything left undone was left undone. He would have been ready with a plain intelligible reason on all these matters in Parliament and elsewhere. And this was not an easy matter

for a civilian after a few months of office. But on minor matters Sir George Lewis was not so good at the War Department as at the Exchequer or the Home Office. He had been apprenticed to the Home Office as under-secretary, and to the Exchequer as financial secretary to the Treasury; but he had never been apprenticed to the War Office. On matters of detail he was obliged to rely on others. He held, and justly, that a Parliamentary chief of temporary, perhaps *very* temporary, tenure of office should be very cautious not to interfere too much with the minor business of his department. He should govern, but he should govern through others. But the due application of this maxim requires that the chief minister should know, as it were by intuition and instinct, which points are important and which are not important. And no civilian introduced to a new department like that of War can at once tell this. He *must* be in the hands of others. In the House of Commons, too, Sir George Lewis could never answer questions of detail on war matters in an offhand manner. He had to say, "I will inquire, and inform the honourable member". At the Home Office he could have answered at once and of himself. It was an act of self-denial in him to go to the War Office. He felt himself out of place there, and was sure that his administration of military matters would not add to his reputation. But he was told it was for the interest of the Government that he should accept the office, and he accepted it. Perhaps he was wrong. The reputation of a first-rate public man is a great public power, and he should be careful not to diminish it. The weight of the greatest men is diminished by their being seen to do daily that which they do not do particularly well. A cold and cynical wisdom particularly disapproves of most men's *best* actions. Few men were less exposed to the censure of such wisdom than Sir George Lewis; but his acceptance of the War Office was a sacrifice of himself to the public, which injured him more than it advantaged the public—which it would have been better not to have made.

The usefulness of men like Sir George Lewis is not to be measured by their usefulness in mere office. It is in the

cabinet that they are of *most* use. Sir George Lewis was made to discuss business with other men. "If," we have heard one who did much business with him say, "if there is any fault in what you say, he will find it out." In council, in the practical discussions of pending questions, a simple masculine intellect like that of Sir George Lewis finds its greatest pleasure and its best use. He was *made* to be a cabinet minister.

The briefest notice of Sir George Lewis should not omit to mention one of his most agreeable, and not one of his least rare, peculiarities—his good-natured use of great knowledge. It would have been easy for a man with such a memory as his, and such studious habits as his, to become most unpopular by cutting up the casual blunders of others. On the contrary, he was a most popular man, for he used his knowledge with a view to amend the ignorance of others, and not with a view to expose it. His conversation was superior either to his speeches or his writings. It had—what is perhaps rarer among parliamentary statesmen than among most people—the flavour of exact thought. It is hardly possible for men to pass their lives in oratorical efforts without losing some part of the taste for close-fitting words. Well-sounding words which are not specially apt, which are not very precise, are as good or better for a popular assembly. Sir George Lewis's words in political conversation were as good as words could be; they might have gone to the press at once. We have compared it to hearing a chapter in Aristotle's *Politics*, and perhaps that may give an idea that it was dull. But pointed thought on great matters is a very pleasant thing to hear, though, after many ages and changes, it is sometimes a hard thing to read. The conversation of the *Dialogue* at the end of his treatise on *The Best Form of Government* has been admired, but it is very inferior to the conversation of the writer. There was a delicate flavour of satire lurking in the precise thought which could not be written down, and which is now gone and irrecoverable.

"When," says Lord Brougham, commenting on the death of a statesman once celebrated and now forgotten—"when a subject presented itself so large and shapeless, and dry and thorny, that few men's fortitude could face, and no one's pati-

ence could grapple with it; or an emergency occurred demanding, on the sudden, access to stores of learning, the collection of many long years, but arranged so as to be made available at the shortest notice—*then* it was men asked where Lawrence was." And now, not only when information is wanted, but when counsel is needed—when parties are confused—when few public men are trusted—when wisdom, always rare, is rarer than even usual—many may ask, in no long time, "Where is Lewis now?"

THE TRIBUTE AT HEREFORD TO SIR G. C. LEWIS.

(1864.)

The following is a shorter article, written in the *Economist* newspaper by Mr. Bagehot, on occasion of the unveiling of the memorial to Sir G. Cornewall Lewis at Hereford in the autumn of 1864. This article, which appeared on the 10th September in that year, seemed to Mr. Hutton either supplementary to, or a very interesting expansion and illustration of, the longer paper. Mr. Hutton therefore included it in his edition of Mr. Bagehot's works.—E. BAGEHOT.

NOTHING could be in more perfect taste than the proceedings at Hereford on the uncovering of the statue of Sir George Lewis. These local events are local casualties. It is impossible to foretell whether the principal local person is not a loquacious fool of good intentions who will say just what he should not, or whether he is a man of feeling and judgment, who will say what he should say with taste and propriety.

There is nothing which Sir George Lewis would so much have disliked as an exaggerated *éloge* over his grave; those who knew him would have had his quiet smile of utter contempt present to them while they read it. Happily nothing of this sort was attempted. The sober and modest nature of the man was duly honoured in the quiet and unobtrusive nature of the remembrance.

Both Mr. Clive and Lord Palmerston spoke of Sir George Lewis with guarded care, as English gentlemen wish to be spoken of, as one English gentleman, therefore, should speak of another. Sir George Lewis had no enemies, but, if he had, no enemy could have taken a just exception to the praises of his friends. He would have exactly desired this. He cared

very little, perhaps nothing, for passing popularity; he would have been prepared with various classical quotations upon the mutability of the vulgar judgment, but he would have greatly valued a restrained expression of deep respect by neighbours and friends who knew him well; he would have believed that they were the legitimate "authority," the persons who ought to speak on that matter.

It is very curious that Lord Palmerston, who spoke, so to say, Sir George Lewis's epitaph, should have had the slowest, and that Sir George Lewis should have had the most rapid, political rise of our time. Unquestionably, Lord Palmerston is in some sense a buoyant man, and Sir George Lewis was in some sense a heavy man, yet the latter came to the surface far quicker. Lord Palmerston was a quarter of a century in Parliament before he was anything at all—before he was any more than a subaltern official; Sir George Lewis was only thirteen years in Parliament altogether, and in that time he was Secretary of the Treasury, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Home Secretary, Secretary for War, and had acquired the perfect respect and confidence of the House of Commons. He finished his whole career as a statesman in about half the number of years that it took Lord Palmerston to become a statesman at all.

The causes which so much delayed Lord Palmerston's rise are not to the present purpose, but the cause which so much accelerated that of Sir George Lewis is very simple. He had, above every other statesman of the age, the gift of inspiring confidence. Coleridge said of Southey that he inspired every one with a confidence in his reliability, and this is an almost exact description of Sir George Lewis. Political opponents and political friends both felt that he had fairly applied a strong and unfettered mind to vast accumulated information, and that his measures were the result of that application. People thought twice before they opposed a grave and business-like measure, proposed by Sir George Lewis in that grave and business-like manner.

In one most important respect he was like Lord Palmerston, though in every other most unlike. His opinions were always

plain and simple opinions. People who went to him with the notion that he was a great philosopher and scholar were often puzzled at his plainness. They expected something far-fetched and recondite, and certainly they did not get it. He held as a principle that difficult schemes, fine calculations, unintelligible policies, were, as such, beyond the range of popular government. Perhaps too he hated them as if they were a kind of mysticism. At all events, a person who could not understand Sir George Lewis's conversation on political business, must have been unfit for every kind of business. It had exactly the homely exactitude that English people like. We have heard it remarked of Sir Robert Peel's speeches that he generally made a remark which seemed to have been left by every one on purpose for him; it was so sensible when made, that every one believed he could have made it. It was much the same with Sir George Lewis. What he said seemed so credible and sensible that in an hour or two you were apt to believe that you had always thought so.

Possibly this distinctness of aim has been rather deficient in our policy for a year past. We certainly believe that Sir George Lewis could have cross-examined Lord Russell on the Danish policy rather acutely. "What," he would have said, "is the object you desire? When you are agreed on that, we will discuss the *modus operandi;* but it is a mistake to deliberate on expedients when there is a fundamental discrepancy respecting ends." At any rate we should like to hear Lord Russell answer Sir George Lewis on this subject. This need of a definite aim ran through all his speculations. To take an example from the foreign politics now most interesting to us—American politics: "I have never," said Sir George Lewis in a letter of March, 1861, now lying before us, "been able, either in conversation or by reading, to obtain an answer to the question, What will the North do if they beat the South? To restore the old Union would be an absurdity. What other state of things does that village lawyer, Lincoln, contemplate, as the fruit of victory? It seems to me that the men now in power at Washington are much such persons as in this country get possession of a disreputable joint-stock

company. There is almost the same amount of ability and honesty." After nearly three years of experience it would be difficult to describe Washington more justly.

But we do not cite the instance to prove Sir George Lewis's power of prediction, so much as to prove his unfailing desire for a distinct aim.

The political precision of Sir George Lewis is peculiarly English, but it is not at all more English than his scholarship. Persons who do not read such books may fancy that "scholars' books" are much the same in all countries. But such is not the case. Mr. Grote's History, to take an instance, could no more have been written in Germany than Bacon's *Novum Organon* could have been written by Socrates. That history belongs to the intellectual atmosphere of England as plainly as our Parliamentary debates. There is in it the constant sense of evidence, the habitual perception of tested probability, which the atmosphere of a free country produces and must produce. Sir George Lewis's books have this instinctive sense of the real value of evidence even more than Mr. Grote's. He could not help feeling it; he did not wish to forget it, and he could not have forgotten it if he had wished.

Sir George Lewis is gone, but he has left a remembrance in many minds which will not grow cold while they are still warm. For many years it will to many be much to have known one who was learned and yet wise, just but yet kind; considerate and observing, and yet never in the least severe.

STERNE AND THACKERAY.[1]

(1864.)

MR. PERCY FITZGERALD has expressed his surprise that no one before him has narrated the life of Sterne in two volumes. We are much more surprised that he has done so. The life of Sterne was of the very simplest sort. He was a Yorkshire clergyman, and lived for the most part a sentimental, questionable, jovial life in the country. He was a queer parson, according to our notions; but in those days there were many queer parsons. Late in life he wrote a book or two, which gave him access to London society; and then he led a still more questionable and unclerical life at the edge of the great world. After that he died in something like distress, and leaving his family in something like misery. A simpler life, as far as facts go, never was known; and simple as it is, the story has been well told by Sir Walter Scott, and has been well commented on by Mr. Thackeray. It should have occurred to Mr. Fitzgerald that a subject may only have been briefly treated because it is a limited and simple subject, which suggests but few remarks, and does not require an elaborate and copious description.

There are but few materials, too, for a long life of Sterne. Mr. Fitzgerald has stuffed his volumes with needless facts about Sterne's distant relations, his great-uncles and ninth cousins, in which no one now can take the least interest. Sterne's daughter, who was left ill-off, did indeed publish two little volumes of odd letters, which no clergyman's daughter

[1] *The Life of Laurence Sterne.* By Percy Fitzgerald, M.A., M.R.I.A. In two volumes. Chapman and Hall.

Thackeray the Humourist and the Man of Letters. By Theodore Taylor, Esq. London: John Camden Hotten.

would certainly have published now. But even these are too small in size and thin in matter to be spun into a copious narrative. We should in this [the *National*] Review have hardly given even a brief sketch of Sterne's life, if we did not think that his artistic character presented one fundmental resemblance and many superficial contrasts to that of a great man whom we have lately lost. We wish to point these out; and a few interspersed remarks on the life of Sterne will enable us to enliven the tedium of criticism with a little interest from human life.

Sterne's father was a shiftless, roving Irish officer in the early part of the last century. He served in Marlborough's wars, and was cast adrift, like many greater people, by the caprice of Queen Anne and the sudden Peace of Utrecht. Of him only one anecdote remains. He was, his son tell us, "a little smart man, somewhat rapid and hasty" in his temper; and during some fighting at Gibraltar he got into a squabble with another young officer, a Captain Phillips. The subject, it seems, was a goose; but this is not now material. It ended in a duel, which was fought with swords in a room. Captain Phillips pinned Ensign Sterne to a plaster wall behind; upon which he quietly asked, or is said to have asked, "*Do* wipe the plaster off your sword before you pull it out of me"; which, if true, showed at least presence of mind. Mr. Fitzgerald, in his famine of matter, discusses who this Captain Phillips was; but into this we shall not follow him.

A smart, humorous, shiftless father of this sort is not perhaps a bad father for a novelist. Sterne was dragged here and there, through scenes of life where no correct and thriving parent would ever have taken him. Years afterwards, with all their harshness softened and half their pains dissembled, Sterne dashed them upon pages which will live for ever. Of money and respectability Sterne inherited from his father little or none; but he inherited two main elements of his intellectual capital—a great store of odd scenes, and the sensitive Irish nature which appreciates odd scenes.

Sterne was borne in the year 1713, the year of the Peace of Utrecht, which cast his father adrift upon the world. Of

his mother we know nothing. Years after, it was said that he behaved ill to her; at least neglected and left her in misery when he had the means of placing her in comfort. His enemies neatly said that he preferred "whining over a dead ass to relieving a living mother". But these accusations have never been proved. Sterne was not remarkable for active benevolence, and certainly may have neglected an old and uninteresting woman, even though that woman was his mother; he was a bad hand at dull duties, and did not like elderly females; but we must not condemn him on simple probabilities, or upon a neat epigram and loose tradition. "The regiment," says Sterne, "in which my father served being broke, he left Ireland as soon as I was able to be carried, and came to the family seat at Elvington, near York, where his mother lived." After this he was carried about for some years, as his father led the rambling life of a poor ensign, who was one of very many engaged during a very great war, and discarded at a hasty peace. Then, perhaps luckily, his father died, and "my cousin Sterne of Elvington," as he calls him, took charge of him, and sent him to school and college. At neither of these was he very eminent. He told one story late in life which may be true, but seems very unlike the usual school-life. "My schoolmaster," he says, "had the ceiling of the schoolroom new whitewashed; the ladder remained there. I one unlucky day mounted it, and wrote with a brush in large capitals LAU. STERNE, for which the usher severely punished me. My master was much hurt at this, and said before me that never should that name be effaced, for I was a boy of genius, and he was sure I should come to preferment." But "genius" is rarely popular in places of education; and it is, to say the least, remarkable that so sentimental a man as Sterne should have chanced upon so sentimental an instructor. It is wise to be suspicious of aged reminiscents; they are like persons entrusted with "untold gold"; there is no check on what they tell us.

Sterne went to Cambridge, and though he did not acquire elaborate learning, he thoroughly learned a gentlemanly stock of elementary knowledge. There is even something scholar-

like about his style. It bears the indefinable traces which an exact study of words will always leave upon the use of words. He was accused of stealing learning, and it is likely enough that a great many needless quotations which were stuck into *Tristram Shandy* were abstracted from second-hand store-houses where such things are to be found. But what he stole was worth very little, and his theft may now at least be pardoned, for it injures the popularity of his works. Our present novel readers do not at all care for an elaborate caricature of the scholastic learning; it is so obsolete that we do not care to have it mimicked. Much of *Tristram Shandy* is a sort of antediluvian fun, in which uncouth Saurian jokes play idly in an unintelligible world.

When he left college, Sterne had a piece of good fortune which in fact ruined him. He had an uncle with much influence in the Church, and he was thereby induced to enter the Church. There could not have been a greater error. He had no special vice; he was notorious for no wild dissipation or unpardonable folly; he had done nothing which even in this more discreet age would be considered imprudent. He had even a refinement which must have saved him from gross vice, and a nicety of nature which must have saved him from coarse associations. But for all that he was as little fit for a Christian priest as if he had been a drunkard and a profligate. Perhaps he was less fit.

There are certain persons whom taste guides, much as morality and conscience guide ordinary persons. They are "gentlemen". They revolt from what is coarse; are sickened by that which is gross; hate what is ugly. They have no temptation to what we may call ordinary vices; they have no inclination for such raw food; on the contrary, they are repelled by it and loathe it. The law in their members does *not* war against the law of their mind; on the contrary, the *taste* of their bodily nature is mainly in harmony with what conscience would prescribe or religion direct. They may not have heard the saying that the "beautiful is higher than the good, for it includes the good". But when they do hear it, it comes upon them as a revelation of their instinctive creed, of the

guidance under which they have been living all their lives. They are pure because it is ugly to be impure; innocent because it is out of taste to be otherwise; they live within the hedgerows of polished society; they do not wish to go beyond them into the great deep of human life; they have a horror of that "impious ocean," yet not of the impiety, but of the miscellaneous noise, the disordered confusion of the whole. These are the men whom it is hardest to make Christian—for the simplest reason; paganism is sufficient for them. Their pride of the eye is a good pride; their love of the flesh is a delicate and directing love. They keep "within the pathways," because they dislike the gross, the uncultured and the untrodden. Thus they reject the primitive precept which comes before Christianity. Repent! repent! says a voice in the wilderness; but the delicate pagan feels superior to the voice in the wilderness. Why should he attend to this uncouth person? He has nice clothes and well-chosen food, the treasures of exact knowledge, the delicate results of the highest civilisation. Is he to be directed by a person of savage habits, with a distorted countenance, who lives on wild honey, who does not wear decent clothes? To the pure worshipper of beauty, to the naturally refined pagan, conscience and the religion of conscience are not merely intruders, but barbarous intruders. At least so it is in youth, when life is simple and temptations, if strong, are distinct. Years afterwards, probably, the purest pagan will be taught by a constant accession of indistinct temptations, and by a gradual declension of his nature, that taste at the best, and sentiment of the very purest, are insufficient guides in the perplexing labyrinth of the world.

Sterne was a pagan. He went into the Church; but Mr. Thackeray, no bad judge, said most justly that his sermons "have not a single Christian sentiment". They are well-expressed, vigorous, moral essays; but they are no more. Much more was not expected by many congregations in the last age. The secular feeling of the English people, though always strong,—though strong in Chaucer's time, and though strong now,—was never so all-powerful as in the last century.

It was in those days that the poet Crabbe was remonstrated with for introducing heaven and hell into his sermons; such extravagances, he was told, were very well for the Methodists, but a *clergyman* should confine himself to sober matters of this world, and show the prudence and the reasonableness of virtue during this life. There is not much of heaven and hell in Sterne's sermons, and what there is seems a rhetorical emphasis which is not essential to the argument, and which might perhaps as well be left out. Auguste Comte might have admitted most of these sermons; they are healthy statements of earthly truths, but they would be just as true if there was no religion at all. Religion helps the argument, because foolish people might be perplexed with this world, and they yield readily to another; religion enables you—such is the real doctrine of these divines, when you examine it—to coax and persuade those whom you cannot rationally convince; but it does not alter the matter in hand—it does not affect that of which you wish to persuade men, for you are but inculcating a course of conduct *in this life*. Sterne's sermons would be just as true if the secularists should succeed in their argument, and the "valuable illusion" of a deity were omitted from the belief of mankind.

However, in fact, Sterne took orders, and by the aid of his uncle, who was a Church politician, and who knew the powers that were, he obtained several small livings. Being a pluralist was a trifle in those easy times; nobody then thought that the parishioners of a parson had a right to his daily presence; if some provision were made for the performance of a Sunday service, he had done his duty, and he could spend the surplus income where he liked. He might perhaps be bound to reside, if health permitted, on one of his livings, but the law allowed him to have many, and he could not be compelled to reside on them all. Sterne preached well-written sermons on Sundays, and led an easy pagan life on other days, and no one blamed him.

He fell in love too, and after he was dead his daughter found two or three of his love-letters to her mother, which she rashly published. They have been the unfeeling sport of

persons not in love up to the present time. Years ago Mr. Thackeray used to make audiences laugh till they cried by reading one or two of them, and contrasting them with certain other letters also about his wife, but written many years later. This is the sort of thing:—

"Yes! I will steal from the world, and not a babbling tongue shall tell where I am—Echo shall not so much as whisper my hiding-place—suffer thy imagination to paint it as a little sun-gilt cottage, on the side of a romantic hill—does thou think I will leave love and friendship behind me? No! they shall be my companions in solitude, for they will sit down and rise up with me in the amiable form of my L.—We will be as merry and as innocent as our first parents in Paradise, before the arch-fiend entered that undescribable scene.

"The kindest affections will have room to shoot and expand in our retirement, and produce such fruit as madness, and envy, and ambition have always killed in the bud.—Let the human tempest and hurricane rage at a distance, the desolation is beyond the horizon of peace. My L. has seen a polyanthus blow in December—some friendly wall has sheltered it from the biting wind. No planetary influence shall reach us, but that which presides and cherishes the sweetest flowers.—God preserve us! how delightful this prospect in idea! We will build and we will plant, in our own way—simplicity shall not be tortured by art—we will learn of nature how to live—she shall be our alchymist, to mingle all the good of life into one salubrious draught.—The gloomy family of care and distrust shall be banished from our dwelling, guarded by thy kind and tutelar deity—we will sing our choral songs of gratitude, and rejoice to the end of our pilgrimage.

"Adieu, my L. Return to one who languishes for thy society.

L. STERNE."

The beautiful language with which young ladies were wooed a century ago is a characteristic of that extinct age; at least, we fear that no such beautiful English will be discovered when our secret repositories are ransacked. The age of ridicule has come in, and the age of good words has gone out.

There is no reason to doubt, however, that Sterne was really in love with Mrs. Sterne. People have doubted it because of these beautiful words; but, in fact, Sterne was just the sort of man to be subject to this kind of feeling. He took—and to this he owes his fame—the *sensitive* view of life. He regarded it not from the point of view of intellect, or

conscience, or religion, but in the plain way in which natural feeling impresses, and will always impress, a natural person. He is a great author; certainly not because of great thoughts, for there is scarcely a sentence in his writings which can be called a thought; nor from sublime conceptions which enlarge the limits of our imagination, for he never leaves the sensuous, —but because of his wonderful sympathy with, and wonderful power of representing, simple human nature. The best passages in Sterne are those which every one knows, like this:—

"Thou hast left this matter short, said my uncle Toby to the corporal, as he was putting him to bed,——and I will tell thee in what, Trim.——In the first place, when thou madest an offer of my services to Le Fevre,—as sickness and travelling are both expensive, and thou knowest he was but a poor lieutenant, with a son to subsist as well as himself, out of his pay,—that thou didst not make an offer to him of my purse; because, had he stood in need, thou knowest, Trim, he had been as welcome to it as myself.——Your honour knows, said the corporal, I had no orders;——True, quoth my uncle Toby,—thou didst very right, Trim, as a soldier, but certainly very wrong as a man.

"In the second place, for which, indeed, thou hast the same excuse, continued my uncle Toby,——when thou offeredst him whatever was in my house,—thou shouldst have offered him my house too:——A sick brother officer should have the best quarters, Trim, and if we had him with us,—we could tend and look to him:——Thou art an excellent nurse thyself, Trim,—and what with thy care of him, and the old woman's, and his boy's, and mine together, we might recruit him again at once, and set him upon his legs.———

"——In a fortnight or three weeks, added my uncle Toby, smiling, —he might march.——He will never march, an' please your honour, in this world, said the corporal:——He will march, said my uncle Toby, rising up from the side of the bed, with one shoe off:——An' please your honour, said the corporal, he will never march, but to his grave:——He shall march, cried my uncle Toby, marching the foot which had a shoe on, though without advancing an inch,—he shall march to his regiment. ——He cannot stand it, said the corporal:——He shall be supported, said my uncle Toby:——He'll drop at last, said the corporal, and what will become of his boy?——He shall not drop, said my uncle Toby, firmly. ——A-well-o'day,—do what we can for him, said Trim, maintaining his point,—the poor soul will die:——He shall not die, by G— I cried my uncle Toby.

"—The ACCUSING SPIRIT, which flew up to heaven's chancery with the oath, blush'd as he gave it in;—and the RECORDING ANGEL, as he

wrote it down, dropp'd a tear upon the word, and blotted it out for ever.

"——My uncle Toby went to his bureau,—put his purse into his breeches pocket, and having ordered the corporal to go early in the morning for a physician,—he went to bed, and fell asleep.

"The sun looked bright the morning after, to every eye in the village but Le Fevre's and his afflicted son's; the hand of death pressed heavy upon his eye-lids,——and hardly could the wheel at the cistern turn round its circle,—when my uncle Toby, who had rose up an hour before his wonted time, entered the lieutenant's room, and without preface or apology, sat himself down upon the chair by the bed-side, and independently of all modes and customs, opened the curtain in the manner an old friend and brother officer would have done it, and asked him how he did,—how he had rested in the night,—what was his complaint,—where was his pain,—and what he could do to help him:——and without giving him time to answer any one of the inquiries, went on and told him of the little plan which he had been concerting with the corporal the night before for him——

"——You shall go home directly, Le Fevre, said my uncle Toby, to my house,—and we'll send for a doctor to see what's the matter,—and we'll have an apothecary,—and the corporal shall be your nurse;——and I'll be your servant, Le Fevre.

"There was a frankness in my uncle Toby,—not the *effect* of familiarity,—but the *cause* of it,—which let you at once into his soul, and showed you the goodness of his nature; to this there was something in his looks, and voice, and manner, super-added, which eternally beckoned to the unfortunate to come and take shelter under him; so that before my uncle Toby had half finished the kind offers he was making to the father, had the son insensibly pressed up close to his knees, and had taken hold of the breast of his coat, and was pulling it towards him.—— The blood and spirit of Le Fevre, which were waxing cold and slow within him, and were retreating to their last citadel, the heart,—rallied back,—the film forsook his eyes for a moment,—he looked up wishfully in my uncle Toby's face,—then cast a look upon his boy,—and that *ligament*, fine as it was,—was never broken————

"Nature instantly ebb'd again,—the film returned to its place,—— the pulse fluttered——stopp'd——went on—— ——throbb'd——stopp'd again——moved——stopp'd——shall I go on?——No."[1]

In one of the "Roundabout Papers" Mr. Thackeray introduces a literary man complaining of his "sensibility". "Ah," he replies, "my good friend, your sensibility is your livelihood: if you did not feel the events and occurrences of life more acutely than others, you could not describe them better; and

[1] *Tristram Shandy*, book vi., chaps. viii.-x.

it is the excellence of your description by which you live." This is precisely true of Sterne. He is a great author because he felt acutely. He is the most pathetic of writers because he had—when writing, at least—the most pity. He was, too, we believe, pretty sharply in love with Mrs. Sterne, because he was sensitive to that sort of feeling likewise.

The difficulty of this sort of character is the difficulty of keeping it. It does not last. There is a certain bloom of sensibility and feeling about it which, in the course of nature, is apt to fade soon, and which, when it has faded, there is nothing to replace. A character with the binding elements—with a firm will, a masculine understanding, and a persistent conscience—may retain, and perhaps improve, the early and original freshness. But a loose-set, though pure character, the moment it is thrown into temptation sacrifices its purity, loses its gloss, and gets, so to speak, out of form entirely.

We do not know with great accuracy what Sterne's temptations were ; but there was one, which we can trace with some degree of precision, which has left ineffaceable traces on his works,—which probably left some traces upon his character and conduct. There was in that part of Yorkshire a certain John Hall Stevenson, a country gentleman of some fortune, and possessed of a castle, which he called Crazy Castle. Thence he wrote tales, which he named "Crazy Tales," but which certainly are not entitled to any such innocent name. The license of that age was unquestionably wonderful. A man of good property could write any evil. There was no legal check, or ecclesiastical check, and hardly any check of public opinion. These "Crazy Tales" have license without humour, and vice without amusement. They are the writing of a man with some wit, but only enough wit for light conversation, which becomes over-worked and dull when it is reduced to regular composition and made to write long tales. The author, feeling his wit jaded perpetually, becomes immoral, in the vain hope that he will cease to be dull. He has attained his reward; he will be remembered for nauseous tiresomeness by all who have read him.

But though the "Crazy Tales" are now tedious, Crazy

Castle was a pleasant place, at least to men like Sterne. He was an idle young parson, with much sensibility, much love of life and variety, and not a bit of grave goodness. The dull duties of a country parson, as we now understand them, would never have been to his taste; and the sinecure idleness then permitted to parsons left him open to every temptation. The frail texture of merely natural purity, the soft fibre of the instinctive pagan, yield to the first casualty. Exactly what sort of life they led at Crazy Castle we do not know; but vaguely we do know, and we may be sure *Mrs.* Sterne was against it.

One part of Crazy Castle has had effects which will last as long as English literature. It had a library richly stored in old folio learning, and also in the amatory reading of other days. Every page of *Tristram Shandy* bears traces of both elements. Sterne, when he wrote it, had filled his head and his mind, not with the literature of his own age, but with the literature of past ages. He was thinking of Rabelais rather than of Fielding; of forgotten romances rather than of Richardson. He wrote, indeed, of his own times and of men he had seen, because his sensitive vivid nature would only endure to write of present things. But the *mode* in which he wrote was largely coloured by literary habits and literary fashions that had long passed away. The oddity of the book was a kind of advertisement to its genius, and that oddity consisted in the use of old manners upon new things. No analysis or account of *Tristram Shandy* could be given which would suit the present generation; being, indeed, a book without plan or order, it is in every generation unfit for analysis. This age would not endure a statement of the most telling points, as the writer thought them, and no age would like an elaborate plan of a book in which there is no plan, in which the detached remarks and separate scenes were really meant to be the whole. The notion that "a plot was to hang plums upon" was Sterne's notion exactly.

The real excellence of Sterne is single and simple; the defects are numberless and complicated. He excels, perhaps, all other writers in mere simple description of common sensi-

tive human action. He places before you in their simplest form the elemental facts of human life; he does not view them through the intellect, he scarcely views them through the imagination; he does but reflect the unimpaired impression that the facts of life, which do not change from age to age, make on the deep basis of human feeling, which changes as little though years go on. The example we quoted just now is as good as any other, though not better than any other. Our readers should go back to it again, or our praise may seem overcharged. It is the portrait painting of the heart. It is as pure a reflection of mere natural feeling as literature has ever given, or will ever give. The delineation is nearly perfect. Sterne's feeling in his higher moments so much overpowered his intellect, and so directed his imagination, that no intrusive thought blemishes, no distorting fancy mars, the perfection of the representation. The disenchanting facts which deface, the low circumstances which debase, the simpler feelings oftener than any other feelings, his art excludes. The feeling which would probably be coarse in the reality is refined in the picture. The unconscious tact of the nice artist heightens and chastens reality, but yet it is reality still. His mind was like a pure lake of delicate water: it reflects the ordinary landscape, the rugged hills, the loose peebles, the knotted and the distorted firs, perfectly and as they are, yet with a charm and fascination that they have not in themselves. This is the highest attainment of art, to be at the same time nature and something more than nature.

But here the great excellence of Sterne ends as well as begins. In *Tristram Shandy* especially there are several defects which, while we are reading it, tease and disgust so much that we are scarcely willing even to admire as we ought to admire the refined pictures of human emotion. The first of these, and perhaps the worst, is the fantastic disorder of the form. It is an imperative law of the writing art, that a book should go straight on. A great writer should be able to tell a great meaning as coherently as a small writer tells a small meaning. The magnitude of the thought to be conveyed, the delicacy of the emotion to be painted, render the introductory

touches of consummate art not of less importance, but of more importance. A great writer should train the mind of the reader for his greatest things; that is, by first strokes and fitting preliminaries he should form and prepare his mind for the due appreciation and the perfect enjoyment of high creations. He should not blunder upon a beauty, nor, after a great imaginative creation, should he at once fall back to bare prose. The high-wrought feeling which a poet excites should not be turned out at once and without warning into the discomposing world. It is one of the greatest merits of the greatest living writer of fiction—of the authoress of *Adam Bede* —that she never brings you to anything without preparing you for it; she has no loose lumps of beauty; she puts in nothing at random; after her greatest scenes, too, a natural sequence of subordinate realities again tones down the mind to this sublunary world. Her logical style—the most logical, probably, which a woman ever wrote—aids in this matter her natural sense of due proportion. There is not a space of incoherency—not a gap. It is not natural to begin with the point of a story, and she does not begin with it. When some great marvel has been told, we all wish to know what came of it, and she tells us. Her natural way, as it seems to those who do not know its rarity, of telling what happened produces the consummate effect of gradual enchantment and as gradual disenchantment. But Sterne's style is *un*natural. He never begins at the beginning and goes straight through to the end. He shies in a beauty suddenly; and just when you are affected he turns round and grins at it. "Ah," he says, "is it not fine?" And then he makes jokes which at that place and at that time are out of place, or passes away into scholastic or other irrelevant matter, which simply disgusts and disheartens those whom he has just delighted. People excuse all this irregularity of form by saying that it was imitated from Rabelais. But this is nonsense. Rabelais, perhaps, could not in his day venture to tell his meaning straight out; at any rate, he did not tell it. Sterne should not have chosen a model so monstrous. Incoherency is not less a defect because an imperfect foreign writer once made use of it. "You may have,

sir, a reason," said Dr. Johnson, "for saying that two and two make five, but they will still make four."[1] Just so, a writer may have a reason for selecting the defect of incoherency, but it is a defect still. Sterne's best things read best out of his books—in Enfield's *Speaker* and other places—and you can say no worse of any one as a continuous artist.

Another most palpable defect—especially palpable now-a-days—in *Tristram Shandy* is its indecency. It is quite true that the customary conventions of writing are much altered during the last century, and much which would formerly have been deemed blameless would now be censured and disliked. The audience has changed; and decency is of course in part dependent on who is within hearing. A divorce case may be talked over across a club-table with a plainness of speech and development of expression which would be indecent in a mixed party, and scandalous before young ladies. Now, a large part of old novels may very fairly be called club-books; they speak out plainly and simply the notorious facts of the world, as men speak of them to men. Much excellent and proper masculine conversation is wholly unfit for repetition to young girls; and just in the same way, books written—as was almost all old literature—for men only, or nearly only, seem coarse enough when contrasted with novels written by young ladies upon the subjects and in the tone of the drawing-room. The change is inevitable: as soon as works of fiction are addressed to boys and girls, they must be fit for boys and girls; they must deal with a life which is real so far as it goes, but which is yet most limited; which deals with the most passionate part of life, and yet omits the errors of the passions; which aims at describing men in their relations to women, and yet omits an all but universal influence which more or less distorts and modifies all these relations.

As we have said, the change cannot be helped. A young ladies' literature must be a limited and truncated literature. The indiscriminate study of human life is not desirable for them, either in fiction or in reality. But the habitual formation

[1] Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, chap. xlix.

of a scheme of thought and a code of morality upon incomplete materials is a very serious evil. The readers for whose sake the omissions are made cannot fancy what is left out. Many a girl of the present day reads novels, and nothing but novels; she forms her mind by them, as far as she forms it by reading at all; even if she reads a few dull books, she soon forgets all about them, and remembers the novels only; she is more influenced by them than by sermons. They form her idea of the world, they define her taste, and modify her morality; not so much in explicit thought and direct act, as unconsciously and in her floating fancy. How is it possible to convince such a girl, especially if she is clever, that on most points she is all wrong? She has been reading most excellent descriptions of mere society; she comprehends those descriptions perfectly, for her own experience elucidates and confirms them. She has a vivid picture of a *patch* of life. Even if she admits in words that there is something beyond, something of which she has no idea, she will not admit it really and in practice. What she has mastered and realised will incurably and inevitably overpower the unknown something of which she knows nothing, can imagine nothing, and can make nothing. "I am not sure," said an old lady, "but I think it's the novels that make my girls so *heady*." It is the novels. A very intelligent acquaintance with limited life makes them think that the world is far simpler than it is, that men are easy to understand, "that mamma is *so* foolish".

The novels of the last age have certainly not this fault. They do not err on the side of reticence. A girl may learn from them more than it is desirable for her to know. But, as we have explained, they were meant for men and not for girls; and if *Tristram Shandy* had simply given a plain exposition of necessary facts—necessary, that is, to the development of the writer's view of the world, and to the telling of the story in hand—we should not have complained; we should have regarded it as the natural product of a now extinct society. But there are most unmistakable traces of "Crazy Castle" in *Tristram Shandy*. There is indecency for indecency's sake. It is made a sort of recurring

and even permeating joke to mention things which are not generally mentioned. Sterne himself made a sort of defence, or rather denial, of this. He once asked a lady if she had read *Tristram*. "I have not, Mr. Sterne," was the answer; "and, to be plain with you, I am informed it is not proper for female perusal." "My dear good lady," said Sterne, "do not be gulled by such stories; the book is like your young heir there" (pointing to a child of three years old, who was rolling on the carpet in white tunics): "he shows at times a good deal that is usually concealed, but it is all in perfect innocence." But a perusal of *Tristram* would not make good the plea. The unusual publicity of what is ordinarily imperceptible is not the thoughtless accident of amusing play; it is deliberately sought after as a nice joke; it is treated as good in itself.

The indecency of *Tristram Shandy*—at least of the early part, which was written before Sterne had been to France—is especially an offence against taste, because of its ugliness. *Moral* indecency is always disgusting. There certainly is a sort of writing which cannot be called decent, and which describes a society to the core immoral, which nevertheless is no offence against art; it violates a higher code than that of taste, but it does not violate the code of taste. The *Mémoires de Grammont*—hundreds of French memoirs about France—are of this kind, more or less. They describe the refined, witty, elegant immorality of an idle aristocracy. They describe a life "unsuitable to such a being as man in such a world as the present one," in which there are no high aims, no severe duties, where some precepts of morals seem not so much to be sometimes broken as to be generally suspended and forgotten; such a life, in short, as God has never suffered men to lead on this earth long, which He has always crushed out by calamity and revolution. This life, though an offence in morals, was not an offence in taste. It was an elegant, a *pretty* thing while it lasted. Especially in enhancing description, where the alloy of life may be omitted, where nothing vulgar need be noticed, where everything elegant may be neatly painted,—such a world is elegant enough. Morals and policy must decide how far such delineations are

permissible or expedient; but the art of beauty—art-criticism —has no objection to them. They are pretty paintings of pretty objects, and that is all it has to say. They may very easily do harm; if generally read among the young of the middle class, they would be sure to do harm; they would teach not a few to aim at a sort of refinement denied them by circumstances, and to neglect the duties allotted to them; it would make shopmen "bad imitations of polished ungodliness," and also bad shopmen. But still, though it would in such places be noxious literature, in itself it would be pretty literature. The critic must praise it, though the moralist must condemn it, and perhaps the politician forbid it.

But *Tristram Shandy's* indecency is the very opposite to this refined sort. It consists in allusions to certain inseparable accompaniments of actual life which are not beautiful, which can never be made interesting, which would, *if* they were decent, be dull and uninteresting. There is, it appears, a certain excitement in putting such matters into a book: there is a minor exhilaration even in petty crime. At first such things look so odd in print that you go on reading them to see what they look like; but you soon give up. What is disenchanting or even disgusting in reality does not become enchanting or endurable in delineation. You are more angry at it in literature than in life; there is much which is barbarous and animal in reality that we could wish away; we endure it because we cannot help it, because we did not make it and cannot alter it, because it is an inseparable part of this inexplicable world. But why we should put this coarse alloy, this dross of life, into the *optional* world of literature, which we can make as we please, it is impossible to say. The needless introduction of accessory ugliness is always a sin in art, and it is not at all less so when such ugliness is disgusting and improper. *Tristram Shandy* is incurably tainted with a pervading vice; it dwells at length on, it seeks after, it returns to, it gloats over, the most unattractive part of the world.

There is another defect in *Tristram Shandy* which would of itself remove it from the list of first-rate books, even if those

which we have mentioned did not do so. It contains eccentric characters only. Some part of this defect may be perhaps explained by one peculiarity of its origin. Sterne was so sensitive to the picturesque parts of life, that he wished to paint the picturesque parts of the people he hated. Country towns in those days abounded in odd characters. They were out of the way of the great opinion of the world, and shaped themselves to little opinions of their own. They regarded the customs which the place had inherited as the customs which were proper for it, and which it would be foolish, if not wicked, to try to change. This gave English country life a motley picturesqueness then, which it wants now, when London ideas shoot out every morning, and carry on the wings of the railroad a uniform creed to each cranny of the kingdom, north and south, east and west. These little public opinions of little places wanted, too, the crushing power of the great public opinion of our own day; at the worst, a man could escape from them into some different place which had customs and doctrines that suited him better. We now may fly into another "city," but it is all the same Roman empire; the same uniform justice, the one code of heavy laws, presses us down and makes us—the sensible part of us at least—as like other people as we can make ourselves. The public opinion of county towns yielded soon to individual exceptions; it had not the confidence in itself which the opinion of each place now receives from the accordant and simultaneous echo of a hundred places. If a man chose to be queer, he was bullied for a year or two, then it was settled that he was "queer"; that was the fact about him, and must be accepted. In a year or so he became an "institution" of the place, and the local pride would have been grieved if he had amended the oddity which suggested their legends and added a flavour to their life. Of course, if a man was rich and influential, he might soon disregard the mere opinion of the petty locality. Every place has wonderful traditions of old rich men who did exactly as they pleased, because they could set at nought the opinions of the neighbours, by whom they were feared; and who did not, as now, dread the unanimous conscience which does not fear even a squire of

£2000 a year, or a banker of £8000, because it is backed by the wealth of London and the magnitude of all the country. There is little oddity in county towns now; they are detached scraps of great places; but in Sterne's time there was much, and he used it unsparingly.

Much of the delineation is of the highest merit. Sterne knew how to describe eccentricity, for he showed its relation to our common human nature: he showed how we were related to it, how in some sort and in some circumstances we might ourselves become it. He reduced the abnormal formation to the normal rules. Except upon this condition, eccentricity is no fit subject for literary art. Every one must have known characters which, if they were put down in books, barely and as he sees them, would seem monstrous and disproportioned—which would disgust all readers—which every critic would term unnatural. While characters are monstrous, they should be kept out of books; they are ugly unintelligibilities, foreign to the realm of true art. But as soon as they can be explained to us, as soon as they are shown in their union with, in their outgrowth from, common human nature, they are the best subjects for great art—for they are new subjects. They teach us, not the old lesson which our fathers knew, but a new lesson which will please us and make us better than they. Hamlet is an eccentric character, one of the most eccentric in literature; but because, by the art of the poet, we are made to understand that he is a possible, a *vividly* possible man, he enlarges our conceptions of human nature; he takes us out of the bounds of commonplace. He "instructs us by means of delight". Sterne does this too. Mr. Shandy, Uncle Toby, Corporal Trim, Mrs. Shandy—for in strictness she too is eccentric from her abnormal commonplaceness—are beings of which the possibility is brought home to us, which we feel we could under circumstances and by influences become; which, though contorted and twisted, are yet spun out of the same elementary nature, the same thread as we are. Considering how odd these characters are, the success of Sterne is marvellous, and his art in this respect consummate. But yet on a point most nearly allied it is very faulty. Though each individual character is

shaded off into human nature, the whole is not shaded off into the world. This society of originals and oddities is left to stand by itself, as if it were a natural and ordinary society,—a society easily conceivable and needing no explanation. Such is not the manner of the great masters; in their best works a constant atmosphere of half-commonplace personages surrounds and shades off, illustrates and explains, every central group of singular persons.

On the whole, therefore, the judgment of criticism on *Tristram Shandy* is concise and easy. It is immortal because of certain scenes suggested by Sterne's curious experience, detected by his singular sensibility, and heightened by his delineative and discriminative imagination. It is defective because its style is fantastic, its method illogical and provoking; because its indecency is of the worst sort, as far as in such matters an artistic judgment can speak of worst and best; because its world of characters forms an incongruous group of singular persons utterly dissimilar to, and irreconcilable with, the world in which we live. It is a great work of art, but of barbarous art. Its mirth is boisterous. It is *provincial*. It is redolent of an inferior society; of those who think crude animal spirits in themselves delightful; who do not know that, without wit to point them, or humour to convey them, they are disagreeable to others; who like disturbing transitions, blank pages, and tricks of style; who do not know that a simple and logical form of expression is the most effective, if not the easiest—the least laborious to readers, if not always the most easily attained by writers.

The oddity of *Tristram Shandy* was, however, a great aid to its immediate popularity. If an author were to stand on his head now and then in Cheapside, his eccentricity would bring him into contact with the police, but it would advertise his writings; they would sell better; people would like to see what was said by a great author who was so odd as to stand so. Sterne put his eccentricity into his writings, and therefore came into collision with the critics; but he attained the same end. His book sold capitally. As with all popular authors he went to London; he was *fêted*. "The *man* Sterne,"

growled Dr. Johnson, "has dinner engagements for three months." The upper world—ever desirous of novelty, ever tired of itself, ever anxious to be amused—was in hopes of a new wit. It naturally hoped that the author of *Tristram Shandy* would talk well, and it sent for him to talk.

He did talk well, it appears, though not always very correctly, and never very clerically. His appearance was curious, but yet refined. Eager eyes, a wild look, a long lean frame, and what he called a cadaverous bale of goods for a body, made up an odd exterior, which attracted notice, and did not repel liking. He looked like a scarecrow with bright eyes. With a random manner, but not without a nice calculation, he discharged witticisms at London parties. His keen nerves told him which were fit witticisms; *they* took, and *he* was applauded.

He published some sermons too. That tolerant age liked, it is instructive as well as amusing to think, sermons by the author of *Tristram Shandy*. People wonder at the rise of Methodism; but ought they to wonder? If a clergyman publishes his sermons *because* he has written an indecent novel—a novel which is purely pagan—which is outside the ideas of Christianity, whose author can scarcely have been inside of them—if a man so made and so circumstanced is *as such* to publish Christian sermons, surely Christianity is a joke and a dream. Wesley was right in this at least; if Christianity be true, the upper-class life of the last century was based on rotten falsehood. A world which is really secular, but which professes to be Christian, is the worst of worlds.

The only point in which Sterne resembles a clergyman of our own time is, that he lost his voice. That peculiar affection of the chest and throat, which is hardly known among barristers, but which inflicts such suffering upon parsons, attacked him also. Sterne too, as might be expected, went abroad for it. He "spluttered French," he tells us, with success in Paris; the accuracy of the grammar some phrases in his letters would lead us to doubt; but few, very few Yorkshire parsons could then talk French at all, and there was doubtless a fine tact and sensibility in what he said. A literary

phenomenon wishing to enjoy society, and able to amuse society, has ever been welcome in the Parisian world. After Paris, Sterne went to the south of France, and on to Italy, lounging easily in pretty places, and living comfortably, as far as one can see, upon the profits of *Tristram Shandy*. Literary success has seldom changed more suddenly and completely the course of a man's life. For years Sterne resided in a country parsonage, and the sources of his highest excitement were a country town full of provincial oddities, and a "Crazy Castle" full of the license and the whims of a country squire. On a sudden London, Paris, and Italy were opened to him. From a few familiar things he was suddenly transferred to many unfamiliar things. He was equal to them, though the change came so suddenly in middle life—though the change from a secluded English district to the great and interesting scenes was far greater, far fuller of unexpected sights and unforeseen phenomena, than it can be now—when travelling is common—when the newspaper is "abroad"—when every one has in his head some feeble image of Europe and the world. Sterne showed the delicate docility which belongs to a sensitive and experiencing nature. He understood and enjoyed very much of this new and strange life, if not the whole.

The proof of this remains written in the *Sentimental Journey*. There is no better painting of first and easy impressions than that book. After all which has been written on the *ancien régime*, an Englishman at least will feel a fresh instruction on reading these simple observations. They are instructive *because* of their simplicity. The old world at heart was not like that; there were depths and realities, latent forces and concealed results, which were hidden from Sterne's eye, which it would have been quite out of his way to think of or observe. But the old world *seemed* like that. This was the spectacle of it as it was seen by an observing stranger; and we take it up, not to know what was the truth, but to know what we should have thought to be the truth if we had lived in those times. People say *Eöthen* is not like the real East; very likely it is not, but it is like what an imaginative

young Englishman would *think* the East. Just so, the *Sentimental Journey* is not the true France of the old monarchy, but it is exactly what an observant quick-eyed Englishman might fancy that France to be. This has given it popularity; this still makes it a valuable relic of the past. It is not true to the outward nature of real life, but it is true to the reflected image of that life in an imaginative and sensitive man.

Here is the actual description of the old chivalry of France; the "cheap defence of nations," [1] as Mr. Burke called it a little while afterwards:—

"When states and empires have their periods of declension, and feel in their turns what distress and poverty is—I stop not to tell the causes which gradually brought the house d'E—— in Brittany into decay. The Marquis d'E—— had fought up against his condition with great firmness; wishing to preserve, and still show to the world, some little fragments of what his ancestors had been—their indiscretions had put it out of his power. There was enough left for the little exigencies of *obscurity*. But he had two boys who look'd up to him for *light*—he thought they deserved it. He had tried his sword—it could not open the way—the *mounting* was too expensive—and simple economy was not a match for it—there was no resource but commerce.

"In any other province in France, save Brittany, this was smiting the root for ever of the little tree his pride and affection wish'd to see reblossom. But in Brittany, there being a provision for this, he avail'd himself of it; and taking an occasion when the states were assembled at Rennes, the Marquis, attended with his two boys, entered the court; and having pleaded the right of an ancient law of the duchy, which, though seldom claim'd, he said, was no less in force, he took his sword from his side—Here, said he, take it; and be trusty guardians of it, till better times put me in condition to reclaim it.

"The president accepted the Marquis's sword—he stayed a few minutes to see it deposited in the archives of his house—and departed.

"The Marquis and his whole family embarked the next day for Martinico, and in about nineteen or twenty years of successful application to business, with some unlook'd-for bequests from distant branches of his house, return'd home to reclaim his nobility and to support it.

"It was an incident of good fortune which will never happen to any traveller but a sentimental one, that I should be at Rennes at the very time of this solemn requisition: I call it solemn—it was so to me.

"The Marquis enter'd the court with his whole family: he sup-

[1] *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, paragraph on Marie Antoinette. (Forrest Morgan.)

ported his lady—his eldest son supported his sister, and his youngest was at the other extreme of the line next his mother—he put his handkerchief to his face twice—

"—There was a dead silence. When the Marquis had approach'd within six paces of the tribunal, he gave the Marchioness to his youngest son, and advancing three steps before his family—he reclaim'd his sword. His sword was given him; and the moment he got it into his hand he drew it almost out of the scabbard—'twas the shining face of a friend he had once given up—he looked attentively along it, beginning at the hilt, as if to see whether it was the same—when observing a little rust which it had contracted near the point, he brought it near his eye, and bending his head down over it—I think I saw a tear fall upon the place; I could not be deceived by what followed.

"'I shall find,' said he, 'some *other way* to get it off.'

"When the Marquis had said this, he return'd his sword into its scabbard, made a bow to the guardians of it—and with his wife and daughter, and his two sons following him, walk'd out.

"O how I envied him his feelings!"[1]

It shows a touching innocence of the imagination to believe—for probably Sterne did believe—or to expect his readers to believe, in a *noblesse* at once so honourable and so theatrical.

In two points the *Sentimental Journey*, viewed with the critic's eye, and as a mere work of art, is a great improvement upon *Tristram Shandy*. The style is simpler and better; it is far more connected; it does not jump about, or leave a topic *because* it is interesting; it does not worry the reader with fantastic transitions, with childish contrivances and rhetorical intricacies. Highly elaborate the style certainly is, and in a certain sense artificial; it is full of nice touches, which must have come only upon reflection—a careful polish and judicious enhancement, in which the critic sees many a trace of time and toil. But a style delicately adjusted and exquisitely polished belongs to such a subject. Sterne undertook to write, *not* of the coarse business of life—very strong common sort of words are best for that—*not* even of interesting outward realities, which may be best described in a nice and simple style, but of the passing moods of human nature, of the impressions which a sensitive nature receives from the world without; and it is

[1] *Sentimental Journey*, ii., "The Sword—Rennes".

only the nicest art and the most dexterous care which can fit an obtuse language to such fine employment. How language was first invented and made we may not know; but beyond doubt it was shaped and fashioned into its present state by common ordinary men and women using it for common and ordinary purposes. They wanted a carving-knife, not a razor or lancet. And those great artists who have to use language for more exquisite purposes, who employ it to describe changing sentiments and momentary fancies and the fluctuating and indefinite inner world, must use curious nicety, and hidden but effectual artifice, else they cannot duly punctuate their thoughts, and slice the fine edges of their reflections. A hair's-breadth is as important to them as a yard's-breadth to a common workman. Sterne's style has been criticised as artificial; but it is justly and rightly artificial, because language used in its natural and common mode was not framed to delineate, cannot delineate, the delicate subjects with which he occupies himself.

That contact with the world, and with the French world especially, should teach Sterne to abandon the arbitrary and fantastic structure of *Tristram Shandy* is most natural. French prose may be unreasonable in its meaning, but is ever rational in its structure; it is logic itself. It will not endure that the reader's mind should be jarred by rough transitions, or distracted by irrelevant oddities. *Antics* in style are prohibited by its severe code, just as eccentricities in manner are kept down by the critical tone of a fastidious society. In a barbarous country oddity may be attractive; in the great world it never is, except for a moment; it is on trial to see whether it is really oddity, to see if it does not contain elements which may be useful to, which may be naturalised in, society at large. But inherent eccentricity, oddity *pur et simple*, is *immiscible* in the great ocean of universal thought; it is apart from it, even when it floats in and is contained in it; very, very soon it is cast out from the busy waters, and left alone upon the beach. Sterne had the sense to be taught by the sharp touch of the world; he threw aside the "player's garb" which he had been tempted to assume. He discarded too, as was equally natural, the ugly

indecency of *Tristram Shandy*. We will not undertake to defend the morality of certain scenes in the *Sentimental Journey;* there are several which might easily do much harm; but there is nothing displeasing to the natural man in them. They are nice enough; to those whose æsthetic nature has not been laid waste by their moral nature, they are attractive. They have a dangerous prettiness, which may easily incite to practical evil, but in itself, and separated from its censurable consequences, such prettiness is an artistic perfection. It was natural that the aristocratic world should easily teach Sterne that separation between the laws of beauty and the laws of morality which has been familiar to it during many ages—which makes so much of its essence.

Mrs. Sterne did not prosper all this time. She went abroad and stayed at Montpellier with her husband; but it is not wonderful that a mere "wife," taken out of Yorkshire, should be unfit for the great world. The domestic appendices of men who rise much hardly ever suit the high places at which they arrive. Mrs. Sterne was no exception. She seems to have been sensible, but it was *domestic* sense. It was of the small world, small; it was fit to regulate the Yorkshire parsonage, it was suitable to a small *ménage* even at Montpellier. But there was a deficiency in general mind. She did not, we apprehend, comprehend or appreciate the new thoughts and feelings which a new and great experience had awakened in her husband's mind. His mind moved, but hers could not; she was anchored, but he was at sea.

To fastidious writers who will only use very dignified words, there is much difficulty in describing Sterne's life in his celebrity. But to humbler persons, who can only describe the things of society in the words of society, the case is simple. Sterne was "an old flirt". These are short and expressive words, and they tell the whole truth. There is no good reason to suspect his morals, but he dawdled about pretty women. He talked at fifty with the admiring tone of twenty; pretended to "freshness" of feeling; though he had become mature, did not put away immature things. That he had any real influence over women is very unlikely; he was a celebrity, and they liked

to exhibit him; he was amusing, and they liked him to amuse them. But they doubtless felt that he too was himself a joke. Women much respect real virtue; they much admire strong and successful immorality; but they neither admire nor respect the timid age which affects the forms of vice without its substance; which preserves the exterior of youth, though the reality is departed; which is insidious but not dangerous, sentimental but not passionate. Of this sort was Sterne, and he had his reward. Women of the world are willing to accept any admiration, but this sort they accept with suppressed and latent sarcasm. They ridiculed his imbecility while they accepted his attentions and enjoyed his society.

Many men have lived this life with but minor penalties, and justly; for though perhaps a feeble and contemptible, it is not a bad or immoral life. But Sterne has suffered a very severe though a delayed and posthumous penalty. He was foolish enough to write letters to some of his friends, and after his death, to get money, his family published them. This is the sort of thing:—

"Eliza will receive my books with this. The sermons came all hot from the heart: I wish that I could give them any title to be offered to yours.—The others came from the head—I am more indifferent about their reception.

"I know not how it comes about, but I am half in love with you—I ought to be wholly so; for I never valued (or saw more good qualities to value) or thought more of one of your sex than of you; so adieu.

"Yours faithfully,

"if not affectionately,

"L. STERNE."

"I cannot rest, Eliza, though I shall call on you at half-past twelve, till I know how you do.—May thy dear face smile, as thou risest, like the sun of this morning. I was much grieved to hear of your alarming indisposition yesterday; and disappointed too, at not being let in. Remember, my dear, that a friend has the same right as a physician. The etiquettes of this town (you'll say) say otherwise.—No matter! Delicacy and propriety do not always consist in observing their frigid doctrines.

"I am going out to breakfast, but shall be at my lodgings by eleven, when I hope to read a single line under thy own hand, that thou art better, and wilt be glad to see thy Bramin."

This Eliza was a Mrs. Draper, the wife of a judge in India,

"much respected in that part of the world". We know little of Eliza, except that there is a stone in Bristol cathedral—

SACRED
TO THE MEMORY
OF
MRS. ELIZABETH DRAPER,
IN WHOM
GENIUS AND BENEVOLENCE
WERE UNITED.
SHE DIED AUGUST 3, 1778, AGED 35.

Let us hope she possessed, in addition to genius and benevolence, the good sense to laugh at Sterne's letters.

In truth, much of the gloss and delicacy of Sterne's pagan instinct had faded away by this time. He still retained his fine sensibility, his exquisite power of entering into and of delineating plain human nature. But the world had produced its inevitable effect on that soft and voluptuous disposition. It is not, as we have said, that he was guilty of grave offences or misdeeds; he made what he would have called a "splutter of vice," but he would seem to have committed very little. Yet, as with most minds which have exempted themselves from rigid principle, there was a diffused texture of general laxity. The fibre had become imperfect; the moral constitution was impaired; the high colour of rottenness had come at last out, and replaced the delicate bloom and softness of the early fruit. There is no need to write commonplace sermons on an ancient text. The beauty and charm of natural paganism will not endure the stress and destruction of this rough and complicated world. An instinctive purity will preserve men for a brief time, but hardly through a long and varied life of threescore and ten years.

Sterne, however, did not live so long. In 1768 he came to London for the last time, and enjoyed himself much. He dined with literary friends and supped with fast friends. He liked both. But the end was at hand. His chest had long been delicate; he got a bad cold which became a pleurisy, and

died in a London lodging—a footman sent by "some gentlemen who were dining," and a hired nurse, being the only persons present. His family were away; and he had devoted himself to intellectual and luxurious enjoyments, which are at least as sure to make a lonely deathbed as a refined and cultivated life. "Self-schooled, self-scanned, self-honoured, self-secure,"[1] a man may perhaps live, but even so by *himself* he will be sure to die. For self-absorbed men the world at large cares little; as soon as they cease to amuse, or to be useful, it flings them aside, and they die alone. Even Sterne's grave, they say, was so obscure and neglected that the corpse-stealers ventured to open it, and his body was dissected without being recognised. The life of literary men is often a kind of sermon in itself; for the pursuit of fame, when it is contrasted with the grave realities of life, seems more absurd and trifling than most pursuits, and to leave less behind it. Mere *amusers* are never respected. It would be harsh to call Sterne a mere amuser, he is much more; but so the contemporary world regarded him. They laughed at his jests, disregarded his death-bed, and neglected his grave.

What, it may be asked, is there in such a career, or such a character as this, to remind us of the great writer whom we have just lost? In externals there seems little resemblance, or rather there seems to be great contrast. On the one side a respected manhood, a long industry, an honoured memory; on the other hand a life lax, if not dissolute, little labour, and a dishonoured grave. Mr. Thackeray, too, has written a most severe criticism on Sterne's character. Can we, then, venture to compare the two? We do so venture; and we allege, and that in spite of many superficial differences, that there was one fundamental and ineradicable resemblance between the two.

Thackeray, like Sterne, looked at everything—at nature, at life, at art—from a *sensitive* aspect. His mind was, to some considerable extent, like a woman's mind. It could comprehend abstractions when they were unrolled and explained before it, but it never naturally created them; never of itself, and without external obligation, devoted itself to them. The

[1] Matthew Arnold: "Sonnet to Shakespeare".

visible scene of life—the streets, the servants, the clubs, the gossip, the West End—fastened on his brain. These were to him reality. They burnt in upon his brain; they pained his nerves; their influence reached him through many avenues, which ordinary men do not feel much, or to which they are altogether impervious. He had distinct and rather painful sensations where most men have but confused and blurred ones. Most men have felt the *instructive* headache, during which they are more acutely conscious than usual of all which goes on around them,—during which everything seems to pain them, and in which they understand it, because it pains them, and they cannot get their imagination away from it. Thackeray had a nerve-ache of this sort always. He acutely felt every possible passing fact—every trivial interlude in society. Hazlitt used to say of himself, and used to say truly that, he could not enjoy the society in a drawing-room for thinking of the opinion which the footman formed of his odd appearance as he went upstairs. Thackeray had too healthy and stable a nature to be thrown so wholly off his balance; but the footman's view of life was never out of his head. The obvious facts which suggest it to the footman poured it in upon him; he could not exempt himself from them. As most men say that the earth *may* go round the sun, but in fact, when we look at the sun, we cannot help believing it goes round the earth,—just so this most impressible, susceptible genius could not help half accepting, half believing the common ordinary sensitive view of life, although he perfectly knew in his inner mind and deeper nature that this apparent and superficial view of life was misleading, inadequate, and deceptive. He could not help seeing everything, and what he saw made so near and keen an impression upon him, that he could not again exclude it from his understanding; it stayed there, and disturbed his thoughts.

If, he often says, "people could write about that of which they are really thinking, how interesting books would be!" More than most writers of fiction, he felt the difficulty of abstracting his thoughts and imagination from near facts which *would* make themselves felt. The sick wife in the next room, the unpaid baker's bill, the lodging-house keeper who doubts

your solvency; these, and such as these—the usual accompaniments of an early literary life—are constantly alluded to in his writings. Perhaps he could never take a grand enough view of literature, or accept the truth of "high art," because of his natural tendency to this stern and humble realism. He knew that he was writing a tale which would appear in a green magazine (with others) on the 1st of March, and would be paid for perhaps on the 11th, by which time, probably, "Mr. Smith" would have to "make up a sum," and would again present his "little account". There are many minds besides his who feel an interest in these realities, though they yawn over "high art" and elaborate judgments.

A painfulness certainly clings like an atmosphere round Mr. Thackeray's writings, in consequence of his inseparable and ever-present realism. We hardly know where it is, yet we are all conscious of it less or more. A free and bold writer, like Sir Walter Scott, throws himself far away into fictitious worlds, and soars there without effort, without pain, and with unceasing enjoyment. You see as it were between the lines of Mr. Thackeray's writings, that his thoughts were never long away from the close proximate scene. His writings might be better if it had been otherwise; but they would have been less peculiar, less individual; they would have wanted their character, their flavour, if he had been able while writing them to forget for many moments the ever-attending, the ever-painful sense of himself.

Hence have arisen most of the censures upon him, both as he seemed to be in society and as he was in his writings. He was certainly uneasy in the common and general world, and it was natural that he should be so. The world poured in upon him, and *inflicted* upon his delicate sensibility a number of petty pains and impressions which others do not feel at all, or which they feel but very indistinctly. As he sat he seemed to read off the passing thoughts—the base, common, ordinary impressions—of every one else. Could such a man be at ease? Could even a quick intellect be asked to set in order with such velocity so many data? Could any temper, however excellent, be asked to bear the contemporaneous influx of innumerable

minute annoyances? Men of ordinary nerves who feel a little of the pains of society, who perceive what really passes, who are not absorbed in the petty pleasures of sociability, could well observe how keen was Thackeray's *sensation* of common events, could easily understand how difficult it must have been for him to keep mind and temper undisturbed by a miscellaneous tide at once so incessant and so forcible.

He could not emancipate himself from such impressions even in a case where most men hardly feel them. Many people have—it is not difficult to have—some vague sensitive perception of what is passing in the minds of the guests, of the ideas of such as sit at meat; but who remembers that there are also nervous apprehensions, also a latent mental life among those who "stand and wait"[1]—among the floating figures which pass and carve? But there was no impression to which Mr. Thackeray was more constantly alive, or which he was more apt in his writings to express. He observes:—

"Between me and those fellow-creatures of mine who are sitting in the room below, how strange and wonderful is the partition! We meet at every hour of the daylight, and are indebted to each other for a hundred offices of duty and comfort of life; and we live together for years, and don't know each other. John's voice to me is quite different from John's voice when it addresses his mates below. If I met Hannah in the street with a bonnet on, I doubt whether I should know her. And all these good people, with whom I may live for years and years, have cares, interests, dear friends and relatives, mayhap schemes, passions, longing hopes, tragedies of their own, from which a carpet and a few planks and beams utterly separate me. When we were at the sea-side, and poor Ellen used to look so pale, and run after the postman's bell, and seize a letter in a great scrawling hand, and read it, and cry in a corner, how should we know that the poor little thing's heart was breaking? She fetched the water, and she smoothed the ribbons, and she laid out the dresses, and brought the early cup of tea in the morning, just as if she had had no cares to keep her awake. Henry (who lived out of the house) was the servant of a friend of mine who lived in chambers. There was a dinner one day, and Henry waited all through the dinner. The champagne was properly iced, the dinner was excellently served; every guest was attended to; the dinner disappeared; the dessert was set; the claret was in perfect order, carefully decanted, and more ready. And then Henry said, 'If you please, sir, may I go home?' He had received word that his house was

[1] Milton, Sonnet xix.

on fire; and, having seen through his dinner, he wished to go and look after his children and little sticks of furniture. Why, such a man's livery is a uniform of honour. The crest on his button is a badge of bravery,"[1]

Nothing in itself could be more admirable than this instinctive sympathy with humble persons; not many things are rarer than this nervous apprehension of what humble persons think. Nevertheless it cannot, we think, be effectually denied that it coloured Mr. Thackeray's writings and the more superficial part of his character—that part which was most obvious in common and current society—with very considerable defects. The pervading idea of the "Snob Papers" is too frequent, too recurring, too often insisted on, even in his highest writings; there was a slight shade of similar feeling even in his occasional society, and though it was certainly unworthy of him, it was exceedingly natural that it should be so, with such a mind as his and in a society such as ours.

There are three methods in which a society may be constituted. There is the equal system, which, with more or less of variation, prevails in France and in the United States. The social presumption in these countries always is that every one is on a level with every one else. In America, the porter at the station, the shopman at the counter, the boots at the hotel, when neither a Negro nor an Irishman, is your equal. In France *égalité* is a political first principle. The whole of Louis Napoleon's *régime* depends upon it; remove that feeling, and the whole fabric of the Empire will pass away. We once heard a great French statesman illustrate this. He was giving a dinner to the clergy of his neighbourhood, and was observing that he had now no longer the power to help or hurt them, when an eager *curé* said, with simple-minded joy: "*Oui, monsieur, maintenant personne ne peut rien, ni le comte, ni le prolétaire*". The democratic priest so rejoiced at the universal levelling which had passed over his nation, that he could not help boasting of it when silence would have been much better manners. We are not now able—we have no room and no inclination—to discuss the advantages of democratic society;

[1] *Roundabout Papers*, "On a Chalk-mark on the Door". (Forrest Morgan.)

but we think in England we may venture to assume that it is neither the best nor the highest form which a society can adopt, and that it is certainly fatal to that development of individual originality and greatness by which the past progress of the human race has been achieved, and from which alone, it would seem, all future progress is to be anticipated. If it be said that people are all alike, that the world is a plain with no natural valleys and no natural hills, the picturesqueness of existence is destroyed, and, what is worse, the instinctive emulation by which the dweller in the valley is stimulated to climb the hill is annihilated and becomes impossible.

On the other hand, there is the opposite system, which prevails in the East—the system of irremovable inequalities, of hedged-in castes, which no one can enter but by birth, and from which no born member can issue forth. This system likewise, in this age and country, needs no attack, for it has no defenders. Every one is ready to admit that it cramps originality, by defining our work irrespective of our qualities and before we were born; that it retards progress, by restraining the wholesome competition between class and class, and the wholesome migration from class to class, which are the best and strongest instruments of social improvement.

And if both these systems be condemned as undesirable and prejudicial, there is no third system except that which we have—the system of *removable inequalities*, where many people are inferior to and worse off than others, but in which each may *in theory* hope to be on a level with the highest below the throne, and in which each may reasonably, and without sanguine impracticability, hope to gain one step in social elevation, to be at last on a level with those who at first were just above them. But, from the mere description of such a society, it is evident that, taking man as he is, with the faults which we know he has, and the tendencies which he invariably displays, some poison of "snobbishness" is inevitable. Let us define it as the habit of "pretending to be higher in the social scale than you really are". Everybody will admit that such pretension is a fault and a vice, yet every observant man of the world would also admit that, considering what other misde-

meanours men commit, this offence is not inconceivably heinous; and that, if people never did anything worse, they might be let off with a far less punitive judgment than in the actual state of human conduct would be just or conceivable. How are we to hope men will pass their lives in putting their best foot foremost, and yet will never boast that their better foot is farther advanced and more perfect than in fact it is? Is boasting to be made a capital crime? Given social ambition as a propensity of human nature; given a state of society like ours, in which there are prizes which every man may seek, degradations which every one may erase, inequalities which every one may remove,—it is idle to suppose that there will not be all sorts of striving to cease to be last and to begin to be first, and it is equally idle to imagine that all such strivings will be of the highest kind. This effort will be, like all the efforts of our mixed and imperfect human nature, partly good and partly bad, with much that is excellent and beneficial in it, and much also which is debasing and pernicious. The bad striving after unpossessed distinction is snobbishness, which from the mere definition cannot be defended, but which may be excused as a natural frailty in an emulous man who is not distinguished, who hopes to be distinguished, and who perceives that a valuable means of gaining distinction is a judicious though false pretension that it has already been obtained.

Mr. Thackeray, as we think, committed two errors in this matter. He lacerates "snobs" in his books as if they had committed an unpardonable outrage and inexpiable crime. That man, he says, is anxious "to know lords; and he pretends to know more of lords than he really does know. What a villain! what a disgrace to our common nature; what an irreparable reproach to human reason!" Not at all; it is a fault which satirists should laugh at, and which moralists condemn and disapprove, but which yet does not destroy the whole vital excellence of him who possesses it,—which may leave him a good citizen, a pleasant husband, a warm friend; "a fellow," as the undergraduate said, "*up* in his *morals*".

In transient society it is possible, we think, that Mr. Thackeray thought too much of social inequalities. They

belonged to that common, plain, perceptible world which filled his mind, and which left him at times, and at casual moments, no room for a purely intellectual and just estimate of men as they really are in themselves, and apart from social perfection or defect. He could gauge a man's reality as well as any observer, and far better than most: his attainments were great, his perception of men instinctive, his knowledge of casual matters enormous; but he had a greater difficulty than other men in relying only upon his own judgment. "What the footman—what Mr. Yellowplush Jeames would think and say," could not but occur to his mind, and would modify, not his settled judgment, but his transient and casual opinion of the poet or philosopher. By the constitution of his mind he thought much of social distinctions; and yet he was in his writings too severe on those who, in cruder and baser ways, showed that they also were thinking much.

Those who perceive that this irritable sensibility was the basis of Thackeray's artistic character, that it gave him his materials, his implanted knowledge of things and men, and gave him also that keen and precise style which hit in description the nice edges of all objects,—those who trace these great qualities back to their real source in a somewhat painful organisation, must have been vexed or amused, according to their temperament, at the common criticism which associates him with Fielding. Fielding's essence was the very reverse; it was a bold spirit of bounding happiness. No just observer could talk to Mr. Thackeray, or look at him, without seeing that he had deeply felt many sorrows—perhaps that he was a man *likely* to feel sorrows—that he was of an anxious temperament. Fielding was a reckless enjoyer. He saw the world—wealth and glory, the best dinner and the worst dinner, the gilded *salon* and the low sponging-house—and he saw that they were good. Down every line of his characteristic writings there runs this elemental energy of keen delight. There is no trace of such a thing in Thackeray. A musing fancifulness is far more characteristic of him than a joyful energy.

Sterne had all this sensibility also, but—and this is the cardinal discrepancy—it did not make him irritable. He was

not hurried away, like Fielding, by buoyant delight; he stayed and mused on painful scenes. But they did not make him angry. He was not irritated at the "foolish fat scullion".[1] He did not vex himself because of the vulgar. He did not amass petty details to prove that tenth-rate people were ever striving to be ninth-rate people. He had no tendency to rub the bloom off life. He accepted pretty-looking things, even the French aristocracy, and he owes his immortality to his making them prettier than they are. Thackeray was pained by things, and exaggerated their imperfections; Sterne brooded over things with joy or sorrow, and he idealised their sentiment—their pathetic or joyful characteristics. This is why the old lady said, "Mr. Thackeray was an uncomfortable writer,"—and an uncomfortable writer he is.

Nor had Sterne a trace of Mr. Thackeray's peculiar and characteristic scepticism. He accepted simply the pains and pleasures, the sorrows and the joys of the world; he was not perplexed by them, nor did he seek to explain them, or account for them. There is a tinge—a mitigated, but perceptible tinge—of Swift's philosophy in Thackeray. "Why is all this? Surely this is very strange? Am I right in sympathising with such stupid feelings, such petty sensations? Why are these things? Am I not a fool to care about or think of them? The world is dark, and the great curtain hides from us all." This is not a steady or a habitual feeling, but it is never quite absent for many pages. It was inevitable, perhaps, that in a sceptical and inquisitive age like this, some vestiges of puzzle and perplexity should pass into the writings of our great sentimentalist. He would not have fairly represented the moods of his time if he omitted that pervading one.

We had a little more to say of these great men, but our limits are exhausted, and we must pause. Of Thackeray it is too early to speak at length. A certain distance is needful for a just criticism. The present generation have learned too much from him to be able to judge him rightly. We do not know the merit of those great pictures which have sunk into our minds, and which have coloured our thoughts, which are

[1] *Tristram Shandy*, book iv., chap. vii.

become habitual memories. In the books we know best, as in the people we know best, small points, sometimes minor merits, sometimes small faults, have an undue prominence. When the young critics of this year have grey hairs, their children will tell them what is the judgment of posterity upon Mr. Thackeray.

WORDSWORTH, TENNYSON, AND BROWNING OR PURE, ORNATE, AND GROTESQUE ART IN ENGLISH POETRY.[1]

(1864.)

WE couple these two books together, not because of their likeness, for they are as dissimilar as books can be; nor on account of the eminence of their authors, for in general two great authors are too much for one essay; but because they are the best possible illustration of something we have to say upon poetical art—because they may give to it life and freshness. The accident of contemporaneous publication has here brought together two books very characteristic of modern art, and we want to show how they are characteristic.

Neither English poetry nor English criticism have ever recovered the *eruption* which they both made at the beginning of this century into the fashionable world. The poems of Lord Byron were received with an avidity that resembles our present avidity for sensation novels, and were read by a class which at present reads little but such novels. Old men who remember those days may be heard to say: "We hear nothing of poetry now-a-days; it seems quite down". And "down" it certainly is, if for poetry it be a descent to be no longer the favourite excitement of the more frivolous part of the "upper" world. That stimulating poetry is now little read. A stray schoolboy may still be detected in a wild admiration for the "Giaour" or the "Corsair" (and it is suitable to his age, and he should not be reproached for it), but the *real* posterity—the quiet students of a past literature—never read them or think of them. A line

[1] *Enoch Arden, etc.* By Alfred Tennyson, D.C.L., Poet Laureate. *Dramatis Personæ.* By Robert Browning.

or two linger on the memory; a few telling strokes of occasional and felicitous energy are quoted, but this is all. As wholes, these exaggerated stories were worthless; they taught nothing, and therefore they are forgotten. If now-a-days a dismal poet were, like Byron, to lament the fact of his birth, and to hint that he was too good for the world, the *Saturday Reviewers* would say that "they doubted if he *was* too good; that a sulky poet was a questionable addition to a tolerable world; that he need not have been born, as far as they were concerned". Doubtless, there is much in Byron besides his dismal exaggeration, but it was that exaggeration which made "the sensation" which gave him a wild moment of dangerous fame. As so often happens, the cause of his momentary fashion is the cause also of his lasting oblivion. Moore's former reputation was less excessive, yet it has not been more permanent. The prettiness of a few songs preserves the memory of his name, but as a poet to *read* he is forgotten. There is nothing to read in him; no exquisite thought, no sublime feeling, no consummate description of true character. Almost the sole result of the poetry of that time is the harm which it has done. It degraded for a time the whole character of the art. It said by practice, by a most efficient and successful practice, that it was the aim, the *duty* of poets, to catch the attention of the passing, the fashionable, the busy world. If a poem "fell dead," it was nothing; it was composed to please the "London" of the year, and if that London did not like it, why, it had failed. It fixed upon the minds of a whole generation, it engraved in popular memory and tradition, a vague conviction that poetry is but one of the many *amusements* for the enjoying classes, for the lighter hours of all classes. The mere notion, the bare idea, that poetry is a deep thing, a teaching thing, the most surely and wisely elevating of human things, is even now to the coarse public mind nearly unknown.

As was the fate of poetry, so inevitably was that of criticism. The science that expounds which poetry is good and which is bad, is dependent for its popular reputation on the popular estimate of poetry itself. The critics of that day had *a* day, which is more than can be said for some since; they professed

to tell the fashionable world in what books it would find new pleasure, and therefore they were read by the fashionable world. Byron counted the critic and poet equal. The *Edinburgh Review* penetrated among the young, and into places of female resort where it does not go now. As people ask, "Have you read *Henry Dunbar?* and what do you think of it?" so they then asked, "Have you read the 'Giaour?' and what do you think of it?" Lord Jeffrey, a shrewd judge of the world, employed himself in telling it what to think; not so much what it ought to think, as what at bottom it did think, and so by dexterous sympathy with current society he gained contemporary fame and power. Such fame no critic must hope for now. His articles will not penetrate where the poems themselves do not penetrate. When poetry was noisy, criticism was loud; now poetry is a still small voice, and criticism must be smaller and stiller. As the function of such criticism was limited, so was its subject. For the great and (as time now proves) the *permanent* part of the poetry of his time—for Shelley and for Wordsworth—Lord Jeffrey had but one word. He said,[1] "It won't do". And it will not do to amuse a drawing-room.

The doctrine that poetry is a light amusement for idle hours, a metrical species of sensational novel, did not indeed become popular without gainsayers. Thirty years ago, Mr. Carlyle most rudely contradicted it. But perhaps this is about all that he has done. He has denied, but he has not disproved. He has contradicted the floating paganism, but he has not founded the deep religion. All about and around us a *faith* in poetry struggles to be extricated, but it is not extricated. Some day, at the touch of the true word, the whole confusion will by magic cease; the broken and shapeless notions will cohere and crystallise into a bright and true theory. But this cannot be yet.

But though no complete theory of the poetic art as yet be possible for us, though perhaps only our children's children will be able to speak on this subject with the assured confidence which belongs to accepted truth, yet something of some

[1] The first words in Lord Jeffrey's celebrated review of the "Excursion" were, "This will never do".

certainty may be stated on the easier elements, and something that will throw light on these two new books. But it will be necessary to assign reasons, and the assigning of reasons is a dry task. Years ago, when criticism only tried to show how poetry could be made a good amusement, it was not impossible that criticism itself should be amusing. But now it must at least be serious, for we believe that poetry is a serious and a deep thing.

There should be a word in the language of literary art to express what the word "picturesque" expresses for the fine arts. *Picturesque* means fit to be put into a picture; we want a word *literatesque*, "fit to be put into a book". An artist goes through a hundred different country scenes, rich with beauties, charms, and merits, but he does not paint any of them. He leaves them alone; he idles on till he finds the hundred-and-first—a scene which many observers would not think much of, but which *he* knows by virtue of his art will look well on canvas, and this he paints and preserves. Susceptible observers, though not artists, feel this quality too; they say of a scene, "How picturesque!" meaning by this a quality distinct from that of beauty, or sublimity, or grandeur —meaning to speak not only of the scene as it is in itself, but also of its fitness for imitation by art; meaning not only that it is good, but that its goodness is such as ought to be transferred to paper; meaning not simply that it fascinates, but also that its fascination is such as ought to be copied by man. A fine and insensible instinct has put language to this subtle use; it expresses an idea without which fine-art criticism could not go on, and it is very natural that the language of pictorial art should be better supplied with words than that of literary criticism, for the eye was used before the mind, and language embodies primitive sensuous ideas, long ere it expresses, or need express, abstract and literary ones.

The reason why a landscape is "picturesque" is often said to be, that such landscape represents an "idea". But this explanation, though, in the minds of some who use it, it is near akin to the truth, fails to explain that truth to those who did not know it before; the word "idea" is so often used in

these subjects when people do not know anything else to say; it represents so often a kind of intellectual insolvency, when philosophers are at their wits' end, that shrewd people will never readily on any occasion give it credit for meaning anything. A wise explainer must, therefore, look out for other words to convey what he has to say. *Landscapes*, like everything else in Nature, divide themselves as we look at them into a sort of rude classification. We go down a river, for example, and we see a hundred landscapes on both sides of it, resembling one another in much, yet differing in something; with trees here, and a farm-house there, and shadows on one side, and a deep pool far on, a collection of circumstances most familiar in themselves, but making a perpetual novelty by the magic of their various combinations. We travel so for miles and hours, and then we come to a scene which also has these various circumstances and adjuncts, but which combines them best, which makes the best whole of them, which shows them in their best proportion at a single glance before the eye. Then we say: "This is the place to paint the river; this is the picturesque point!" Or, if not artists or critics of art, we feel without analysis or examination that somehow this bend or sweep of the river shall in future *be the river to us:* that it is the image of it which we will retain in our mind's eye, by which we will remember it, which we will call up when we want to describe or think of it. Some fine countries, some beautiful rivers, have not this picturesque quality: they give us elements of beauty, but they do not combine them together; we go on for a time delighted, but *after* a time somehow we get wearied; we feel that we are taking in nothing and learning nothing; we get no collected image before our mind; we see the accidents and circumstances of that sort of scenery, but the summary scene we do not see; we find *disjecta membra*, but no form; various and many and faulty approximations are displayed in succession; but the absolute perfection in that country's or river's scenery—its *type*—is withheld. We go away from such places in part delighted, but in part baffled; we have been puzzled by pretty things; we have beheld a hundred different inconsistent specimens of

the same sort of beauty; but the rememberable idea, the full development, the characteristic individuality of it, we have not seen.

We find the same sort of quality in all parts of painting. We see a portrait of a person we know, and we say, "It is like—yes, like, of course, but it is not *the man*"; we feel it could not be any one else, but still, somehow it fails to bring home to us the individual as we know him to be. *He* is not there. An accumulation of features like his are painted, but his essence is not painted; an approximation more or less excellent is given, but the characteristic expression, the *typical* form, of the man is withheld.

Literature—the painting of words—has the same quality, but wants the analogous word. The word "*literatesque*" would mean, if we possessed it, that perfect combination in *subject-matter* of literature, which suits the *art* of literature. We often meet people, and say of them, sometimes meaning well and sometimes ill: "How well so-and-so would do in a book!" Such people are by no means the best people; but they are the most effective people—the most rememberable people. Frequently, when we first know them, we like them because they explain to us so much of our experience; we have known many people "like that," in one way or another, but we did not seem to understand them; they were nothing to us, for their traits were indistinct; we forgot them, for they hitched on to nothing, and we could not classify them. But when we see the *type* of the genus, at once we seem to comprehend its character; the inferior specimens are explained by the perfect embodiment; the approximations are definable when we know the ideal to which they draw near. There are an infinite number of classes of human beings, but in each of these classes there is a distinctive type which, if we could expand it in words, would define the class. We cannot expand it in formal terms any more than a landscape, or a species of landscape; but we have an art, an art of words, which can draw it. Travellers and others often bring home, in addition to their long journals—which, though so living to them, are so dead, so inanimate, so undescriptive to all else—

a pen-and-ink sketch, rudely done very likely, but which, perhaps, even the more for the blots and strokes, gives a distinct notion, an emphatic image, to all who see it. We say at once, *now* we know the sort of thing. The sketch has *hit* the mind. True literature does the same. It describes sorts, varieties, and permutations, by delineating the type of each sort, the ideal of each variety, the central, the marking trait of each permutation.

On this account, the greatest artists of the world have ever shown an enthusiasm for reality. To care for notions and abstractions; to philosophise; to reason out conclusions; to care for schemes of thought, are signs in the artistic mind of secondary excellence. A Schiller, a Euripides, a Ben Jonson, cares for *ideas*—for the parings of the intellect, and the distillation of the mind; a Shakespeare, a Homer, a Goethe, finds his mental occupation, the true home of his natural thoughts, in the real world—"which is the world of all of us"[1]—where the face of Nature, the moving masses of men and women, are ever changing, ever multiplying, ever mixing one with the other. The reason is plain—the business of the poet, of the artist, is with *types;* and those types are mirrored in reality. As a painter must not only have a hand to execute, but an eye to distinguish—as he must go here and there through the real world to catch the picturesque man, the picturesque scene, which is to live on his canvas—so the poet must find in that reality, the *literatesque* man, the *literatesque* scene, which Nature intends for him, and which will live in his page. Even in reality he will not find this type complete, or the characteristics perfect; but there he will find, at least, something, some hint, some intimation, some suggestion; whereas, in the stagnant home of his own thoughts he will find nothing pure, nothing as it is, nothing which does not bear his own mark, which is not somehow altered by a mixture with himself.

The first conversation of Goethe and Schiller illustrates this conception of the poet's art. Goethe was at that time prejudiced against Schiller, we must remember, partly from what he considered the outrages of the "Robbers," partly be-

[1] Wordsworth: "Prelude," book xi.

cause of the philosophy of Kant. Schiller's "Essay on Grace and Dignity," he tells us—

"Was yet less of a kind to reconcile me. The philosophy of Kant, which exalts the dignity of mind so highly, while appearing to restrict it, Schiller had joyfully embraced: it unfolded the extraordinary qualities which Nature had implanted in him; and in the lively feeling of freedom and self-direction, he showed himself unthankful to the Great Mother, who surely had not acted like a step-dame towards him. Instead of viewing her as self-subsisting, as producing with a living force, and according to appointed laws, alike the highest and the lowest of her works, he took her up under the aspect of some empirical native qualities of the human mind. Certain harsh passages I could even directly apply to myself: they exhibited my confession of faith in a false light; and I felt that if written without particular attention to me, they were still worse; for, in that case, the vast chasm which lay between us gaped but so much the more distinctly."

After a casual meeting at a Society for Natural History, they walked home, and Goethe proceeds:—

"We reached his house; the talk induced me to go in. I then expounded to him, with as much vivacity as possible, the *Metamorphosis of Plants*,[1] drawing out on paper, with many characteristic strokes, a symbolic plant for him, as I proceeded. He heard and saw all this, with much interest and distinct comprehension; but when I had done, he shook his head and said: 'This is no experiment, this is an idea'. I stopped with some degree of irritation; for the point which separated us was most luminously marked by this expression. The opinions in 'Dignity and Grace' again occurred to me; the old grudge was just awakening; but I smothered it, and merely said: 'I was happy to find that I had got ideas without knowing it, nay, that I saw them before my eyes'.

"Schiller had much more prudence and dexterity of management than I; he was also thinking of his periodical the *Horen*, about this time, and of course rather wished to attract than repel me. Accordingly, he answered me like an accomplished Kantite; and as my stiff-necked Realism gave occasion to many contradictions, much battling took place between us, and at last a truce, in which neither party would consent to yield the victory, but each held himself invincible. Positions like the following grieved me to the very soul: *How can there ever be an experiment, that shall correspond with an idea? The specific quality of an idea is, that no experiment can reach it or agree with it.* Yet if he held as an idea, the same thing

[1] "A curious physiologico-botanical theory by Goethe, which appears to be entirely unknown in this country: though several eminent continental botanists have noticed it with commendation. It is explained at considerable length in this same *Morphologie*."—Note by Carlyle.

which I looked upon as an experiment, there must certainly, I thought, be some community between us—some ground whereon both of us might meet!"[1]

With Goethe's natural history, or Kant's philosophy, we have here no concern; but we can combine the expressions of the two great poets into a nearly complete description of poetry. The "symbolic plant" is the *type* of which we speak, the ideal at which inferior specimens aim, the class characteristic in which they all share, but which none shows forth fully. Goethe was right in searching for this in reality and nature; Schiller was right in saying that it was an "idea," a transcending notion to which approximations could be found in experience, but only approximations—which could not be found there itself. Goethe, as a poet, rightly felt the primary necessity of outward suggestion and experience; Schiller, as a philosopher, rightly felt its imperfection.

But in these delicate matters, it is easy to misapprehend. There is, undoubtedly, a sort of poetry which is produced as it were out of the author's mind. The description of the poet's own moods and feelings is a common sort of poetry—perhaps the commonest sort. But the peculiarity of such cases is, that the poet does not describe himself *as* himself: autobiography is not his object; he takes himself as a specimen of human nature; he describes, not himself, but a distillation of himself: he takes such of his moods as are most characteristic, as most typify certain moods of certain men, or certain moods of all men; he chooses preponderant feelings of special sorts of men, or occasional feelings of men of all sorts; but with whatever other difference and diversity, the essence is that such self-describing poets describe what is *in* them, but not *peculiar* to them,—what is generic, not what is special and individual. Gray's "Elegy" describes a mood which Gray felt more than other men, but which most others, perhaps all others, feel too. It is more popular, perhaps, than any English poem, because that sort of feeling is the most diffused of high feelings, and because Gray added to a singular nicety

[1] Appendix to Carlyle's *Life of Schiller*, note C.

of fancy a habitual proneness to a *contemplative*—a discerning but unbiassed—meditation on death and on life. Other poets cannot hope for such success: a subject so popular, so grave, so wise, and yet so suitable to the writer's nature, is hardly to be found. But the same ideal, the same unautobiographical character is to be found in the writings of meaner men. Take sonnets of Hartley Coleridge, for example:—

I.

"TO A FRIEND.

"When we were idlers with the loitering rills,
The need of human love we little noted:
Our love was Nature; and the peace that floated
On the white mist, and dwelt upon the hills,
To sweet accord subdued our wayward wills:
One soul was ours, one mind, one heart devoted,
That, wisely doating, ask'd not why it doated,
And ours the unknown joy, which knowing kills.
But now I find, how dear thou wert to me;
That man is more than half of Nature's treasure,
Of that fair Beauty which no eye can see,
Of that sweet music which no ear can measure;
And now the streams may sing for others' pleasure,
The hills sleep on in their eternity."

II.

"TO THE SAME.

"In the great city we are met again,
Where many souls there are that breathe and die,
Scarce knowing more of Nature's potency,
Than what they learn from heat, or cold, or rain,
The sad vicissitude of weary pain:—
For busy man is lord of ear and eye,
And what hath Nature, but the vast void sky,
And the thronged river toiling to the main?
Oh! say not so, for she shall have her part
In every smile, in every tear that falls,
And she shall hide her in the secret heart,
Where love persuades, and sterner duty calls:
But worse it were than death, or sorrow's smart,
To live without a friend within these walls."

III.

"TO THE SAME.

"We parted on the mountains, as two streams
From one clear spring pursue their several ways;
And thy fleet course hath been through many a maze
In foreign lands, where silvery Padus gleams
To that delicious sky, whose glowing beams
Brightened the tresses that old Poets praise;
Where Petrarch's patient love and artful lays,
And Ariosto's song of many themes,
Moved the soft air. But I, a lazy brook,
As close pent up within my native dell,
Have crept along from nook to shady nook,
Where flow'rets blow, and whispering Naiads dwell.
Yet now we meet, that parted were so wide,
O'er rough and smooth to travel side by side."

The contrast of instructive and enviable locomotion with refining but instructive meditation is not special and peculiar to these two, but general and universal. It was set down by Hartley Coleridge because he was the most meditative and refining of men.

What sort of *literatesque* types are fit to be described in the sort of literature called poetry, is a matter on which much might be written. Mr. Arnold, some years since, put forth a theory that the art of poetry could only delineate *great actions*. But though, rightly interpreted and understood—using the word action so as to include high and sound activity in contemplation—this definition may suit the highest poetry, it certainly cannot be stretched to include many inferior sorts and even many good sorts. Nobody in their senses would describe Gray's "Elegy" as the delineation of a "great action"; some kinds of mental contemplation may be energetic enough to deserve this name, but Gray would have been frightened at the very word. He loved scholarlike calm and quiet inaction; his very greatness depended on his *not* acting, on his "wise passiveness," on his indulging the grave idleness which so well appreciates so much of human life. But the best answer—the *reductio ad absurdum*—of Mr. Arnold's doctrine, is the mutilation which it has caused him to make of his own writings. It has forbidden him, he tells us, to reprint "Empedocles"—a poem undoubtedly con-

taining defects and even excesses, but containing also these lines:—

"And yet what days were those, Parmenides!
When we were young, when we could number friends
In all the Italian cities like ourselves,
When with elated hearts we join'd your train,
Ye Sun-born virgins! on the road of Truth.
Then we could still enjoy: then neither thought
Nor outward things were clos'd and dead to us,
But we receiv'd the shock of mighty thoughts
On simple minds with a pure natural joy;
And if the sacred load oppress'd our brain,
We had the power to feel the pressure eas'd,
The brow unbound, the thoughts flow free again,
In the delightful commerce of the world.
We had not lost our balance then, nor grown
Thought's slaves, and dead to every natural joy.
The smallest thing could give us pleasure then—
The sports of the country people;
A flute note from the woods;
Sunset over the sea;
Seed-time and harvest;
The reapers in the corn;
The vinedresser in the vineyard;
The village-girl at her wheel.
Fulness of life and power of feeling, ye
Are for the happy, for the souls at ease,
Who dwell on a firm basis of content.
But he who has outliv'd his prosperous days,
But he, whose youth fell on a different world
From that on which his exil'd age is thrown;
Whose mind was fed on other food, was train'd
By other rules that are in vogue to-day;
Whose habit of thought is fix'd, who will not change,
But in a world he loves not must subsist
In ceaseless opposition, be the guard
Of his own breast, fetter'd to what he guards,
That the world win no mastery over him;
Who has no friend, no fellow left, not one;
Who has no minute's breathing space allow'd
To nurse his dwindling faculty of joy;—
Joy and the outward world must die to him
As they are dead to me."

What freak of criticism can induce a man who has written

such poetry as this, to discard it, and say it is not poetry? Mr. Arnold is privileged to speak of his own poems, but no other critic could speak so and not be laughed at.

We are disposed to believe that no very sharp definition can be given—at least in the present state of the critical art—of the boundary line between poetry and other sorts of imaginative delineation. Between the undoubted dominions of the two kinds there is a debatable land; everybody is agreed that the "Œdipus at Colonus" is poetry: every one is agreed that the wonderful appearance of Mrs. Veal[1] is *not* poetry. But the exact line which separates grave novels in verse, like "Aylmer's Field" or "Enoch Arden," from grave novels not in verse, like *Silas Marner* or *Adam Bede*, we own we cannot draw with any confidence. Nor, perhaps, is it very important; whether a narrative is thrown into verse or not certainly depends in part on the taste of the age, and in part on its mechanical helps. Verse is the only mechanical help to the memory in rude times, and there is little writing till a cheap something is found to write upon, and a cheap something to write with. Poetry—verse, at least—is the literature of *all work* in early ages; it is only later ages which write in what *they* think a natural and simple prose. There are other casual influences in the matter too; but they are not material now. We need only say here that poetry, because it has a more marked rhythm than prose, must be more intense in meaning and more concise in style than prose. People expect a "marked rhythm" to imply something worth marking; if it fails to do so they are disappointed. They are displeased at the visible waste of a powerful instrument; they call it "doggerel," and rightly call it, for the metrical expression of full thought and eager feeling —the burst of metre—incident to high imagination, should not be wasted on petty matters which prose does as well—which it does better—which it suits by its very limpness and weakness, whose small changes it follows more easily, and to whose lowest details it can fully and without effort degrade itself. Verse, too, should be *more concise*, for long-continued rhythm tends to jade the mind, just as brief rhythm tends to attract the attention.

[1] De Foe's.

Poetry should be memorable and emphatic, intense, and *soon over.*

The great divisions of poetry, and of all other literary art, arise from the different modes in which these *types*—these characteristic men, these characteristic feelings—may be variously described. There are three principal modes which we shall attempt to describe—the *pure*, which is sometimes, but not very wisely, called the classical; the *ornate*, which is also unwisely called romantic; and the *grotesque*, which might be called the mediæval. We will describe the nature of these a little. Criticism, we know, must be brief—not, like poetry, because its charm is too intense to be sustained—but, on the contrary, because its interest is too weak to be prolonged; but elementary criticism, if an evil, is a necessary evil; a little while spent among the simple principles of art is the first condition, the absolute prerequisite, for surely apprehending and wisely judging the complete embodiments and miscellaneous forms of actual literature.

The definition of *pure* literature is, that it describes the type in its simplicity—we mean, with the exact amount of accessory circumstance which is necessary to bring it before the mind in finished perfection, and no more than that amount. The *type* needs some accessories from its nature—a picturesque landscape does not consist wholly of picturesque features. There is a setting of surroundings—as the Americans would say, of fixings—without which the reality is not itself. By a traditional mode of speech, as soon as we see a picture in which a complete effect is produced by detail so rare and so harmonised as to escape us, we say, How "classical"! The whole which is to be seen appears at once and through the detail, but the detail itself is not seen: we do not think of that which gives us the idea; we are absorbed in the idea itself. Just so in literature, the pure art is that which works with the fewest strokes; the fewest, that is, for its purpose, for its aim is to call up and bring home to men an idea, a form, a character, and if that idea be twisted, that form be involved, that character perplexed, many strokes of literary art will be needful. Pure art does not mutilate its object; it represents it as fully as is possible with the slightest effort which is possible:

it shrinks from no needful circumstances, as little as it inserts any which are needless. The precise peculiarity is not merely that no incidental circumstance is inserted which does not tell on the main design—no art is fit to be called *art* which permits a stroke to be put in without an object—but that only the minimum of such circumstance is inserted at all. The form is sometimes said to be bare, the accessories are sometimes said to be invisible, because the appendages are so choice that the shape only is perceived.

The English literature undoubtedly contains much impure literature—impure in its style, if not in its meaning—but it also contains one great, one nearly perfect, model of the pure style in the literary expression of typical *sentiment;* and one not perfect, but gigantic and close approximation to perfection in the pure delineation of objective character. Wordsworth, perhaps, comes as near to choice purity of style in sentiment as is possible; Milton, with exceptions and conditions to be explained, approaches perfection by the strenuous purity with which he depicts character.

A wit once said, "*pretty* women had more features than *beautiful* women," and though the expression may be criticised, the meaning is correct. Pretty women seem to have a great number of attractive points, each of which attracts your attention, and each one of which you remember afterwards; yet these points have not grown together, their features have not linked themselves into a single inseparable whole. But a beautiful woman is a whole as she is; you no more take her to pieces than a Greek statue; she is not an aggregate of divisible charms, she is a charm in herself. Such ever is the dividing test of pure art; if you catch yourself admiring its details, it is defective; you ought to think of it as a single whole which you must remember, which you must admire, which somehow subdues you while you admire it, which is a "possession" to you "for ever".

Of course, no individual poem embodies this idea perfectly; of course, every human word and phrase has its imperfections, and if we choose an instance to illustrate that ideal, the instance has scarcely a fair chance. By contrasting it with the ideal,

we suggest its imperfections; by protruding it as an example, we turn on its defectiveness the microscope of criticism. Yet these two sonnets of Wordsworth may be fitly read in this place, not because they are quite without faults, or because they are the very best examples of their kind of style, but because they are luminous examples; the compactness of the sonnet and the gravity of the sentiment, hedging in the thoughts, restraining the fancy, and helping to maintain a singleness of expression.

"THE TROSSACHS.

"There's not a nook within this solemn pass,
But were an apt confessional for one
Taught by his summer spent, his autumn gone,
That life is but a tale of morning grass
Withered at eve. From scenes of art which chase
That thought away, turn, and with watchful eyes
Feed it 'mid Nature's old felicities,
Rocks, rivers, and smooth lakes more clear than glass
Untouched, unbreathed upon. Thrice happy quest,
If from a golden perch of aspen spray
(October's workmanship to rival May)
The pensive warbler of the ruddy breast
That moral sweeten by a heaven-taught lay
Lulling the year, with all its cares, to rest!"

"COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE, SEPT. 3, 1802.

"Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This city now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!"

Instances of barer style than this may easily be found, instances of colder style—few better instances of purer style.

Not a single expression (the invocation in the concluding couplet of the second sonnet perhaps excepted) can be spared, yet not a single expression rivets the attention. If, indeed, we take out the phrase—

> "The city now doth, like a garment, wear
> The beauty of the morning,"

and the description of the brilliant yellow of autumn—

> "October's workmanship to rival May,"

they have independent value, but they are not noticed in the sonnet when we read it through; they fall into place there, and being in their place, are not seen. The great subjects of the two sonnets, the religious aspect of beautiful but grave Nature—the religious aspect of a city about to awaken and be alive, are the only ideas left in our mind. To Wordsworth has been vouchsafed the last grace of the self-denying artist; you think neither of him nor his style, but you cannot help thinking of—you *must* recall—the exact phrase, the *very* sentiment he wished.

Milton's purity is more eager. In the most exciting parts of Wordsworth—and these sonnets are not very exciting—you always feel, you never forget, that what you have before you is the excitement of a recluse. There is nothing of the stir of life; nothing of the brawl of the world. But Milton though always a scholar by trade, though solitary in old age, was through life intent on great affairs, lived close to great scenes, watched a revolution, and if not an actor in it, was at least secretary to the actors. He was familiar—by daily experience and habitual sympathy—with the earnest debate of arduous questions on which the life and death of the speakers certainly depended, on which the weal or woe of the country perhaps depended. He knew how profoundly the individual character of the speakers—their inner and real nature—modifies their opinion on such questions; he knew how surely that nature will appear in the expression of them. This great experience, fashioned by a fine imagination, gives to the debate of the Satanic Council in Pandæmonium its reality and its life. It is a debate in the Long Parliament, and though the theme of

"Paradise Lost" obliged Milton to side with the monarchical element in the universe, his old habits are often too much for him; and his real sympathy—the impetus and energy of his nature—side with the rebellious element. For the purposes of art this is much better. Of a court, a poet can make but little; of a heaven, he can make very little; but of a courtly heaven, such as Milton conceived, he can make nothing at all. The idea of a court and the idea of a heaven are so radically different that a distinct combination of them is always grotesque and often ludicrous. "Paradise Lost," as a whole, is radically tainted by a vicious principle. It professes to justify the ways of God to man, to account for sin and death, and it tells you that the whole originated in a political event; in a court squabble as to a particular act of patronage and the due or undue promotion of an eldest son. Satan may have been wrong, but on Milton's theory he had an arguable case at least. There was something arbitrary in the promotion; there were little symptoms of a job; in "Paradise Lost" it is always clear that the devils are the weaker, but it is never clear that the angels are the better. Milton's sympathy and his imagination slip back to the Puritan rebels whom he loved, and desert the courtly angels whom he could not love, although he praised them. There is no wonder that Milton's hell is better than his heaven, for he hated officials and he loved rebels,—he employs his genius below, and accumulates his pedantry above. On the great debate in Pandæmonium all his genius is concentrated. The question is very practical; it is, "What are we devils to do, now we have lost heaven?" Satan, who presides over and manipulates the assembly; Moloch,

> "The fiercest spirit
> That fought in Heaven, now fiercer by despair,"

who wants to fight again; Belial, "the man of the world," who does not want to fight any more; Mammon, who is for commencing an industrial career; Beelzebub, the official statesman,

> "Deep on his front engraven,
> Deliberation sat and Public care,"

who, at Satan's instance, proposes the invasion of earth,—are

as distinct as so many statues. Even Belial, "the man of the world," the sort of man with whom Milton had least sympathy, is perfectly painted. An inferior artist would have made the actor who "counselled ignoble ease and peaceful sloth," a degraded and ugly creature; but Milton knew better. He knew that low notions required a better garb than high notions. Human nature is not a high thing, but at least it has a high idea of itself; it will not accept mean maxims, unless they are gilded and made beautiful. A prophet in goat-skin may cry, "Repent, repent," but it takes "purple and fine linen," to be able to say, "Continue in your sins". The world vanquishes with its speciousness and its show, and the orator who is to persuade men to worldliness must have a share in them. Milton well knew this; after the warlike speech of the fierce Moloch, he introduces a brighter and a more graceful spirit.

> "He ended frowning, and his look denounced
> Desp'rate revenge, and battle dangerous
> To less than Gods. On th' other side up rose
> Belial, in act more graceful and humane:
> A fairer person lost not Heaven; he seem'd
> For dignity composed and high exploit:
> But all was false and hollow, though his tongue
> Dropt manna, and could make the worse appear
> The better reason, to perplex and dash
> Maturest counsels; for his thoughts were low,
> To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds
> Tim'rous and slothful: yet he pleased the ear,
> And with persuasive accent thus began:"

He does not begin like a man with a strong case, but like a man with a weak case; he knows that the pride of human nature is irritated by mean advice, and though he may probably persuade men to take it, he must carefully apologise for giving it. Here, as elsewhere, though the formal address is to devils, the real address is to men: to the human nature which we know, not to the fictitious diabolic nature we do not know.

> "I should be much for open war, O Peers
> As not behind in hate, if what was urged
> Main reason to persuade immediate war,
> Did not dissuade me most, and seem to cast

Ominous conjecture on the whole success:
When he who most excels in fact of arms,
In what he counsels, and in what excels
Mistrustful, grounds his courage on despair,
And utter dissolution, as the scope
Of all his aim, after some dire revenge.
First, what revenge? The tow'rs of Heav'n are fill'd
With armed watch, that render all access
Impregnable; oft on the bord'ring deep
Encamped their legions, or with obscure wing
Scout far and wide into the realm of night,
Scorning surprise. Or could we break our way
By force, and at our heels all Hell should rise
With blackest insurrection, to confound
Heav'n's purest light, yet our Great Enemy,
All incorruptible, would on His throne
Sit unpolluted, and th' ethereal mould
Incapable of stain would soon expel
Her mischief, and purge off the baser fire
Victorious. Thus repulsed, our final hope
Is flat despair. We must exasperate
Th' Almighty Victor to spend all His rage,
And that must end us: that must be our cure,
To be no more? Sad cure; for who would lose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
To perish rather, swallow'd up and lost
In the wide womb of uncreated night,
Devoid of sense and motion? And who knows,
Let this be good, whether our angry Foe
Can give it, or will ever? How He can
Is doubtful; that he never will is sure.
Will He, so wise, let loose at once His ire
Belike through impotence, or unaware,
To give His enemies their wish, and end
Them in His anger, whom His anger saves
To punish endless? Wherefore cease we then?
Say they who counsel war, we are decreed,
Reserved, and destined, to eternal woe;
Whatever doing, what can we suffer more,
What can we suffer worse? Is this then worst,
Thus sitting, thus consulting, thus in arms?"

. . . . . .

And so on.

Mr. Pitt knew this speech by heart, and Lord Macaulay

has called it incomparable; and these judges of the oratorical art have well decided. A mean foreign policy cannot be better defended. Its sensibleness is effectually explained, and its tameness as much as possible disguised.

But we have not here to do with the excellence of Belial's policy, but with the excellence of his speech; and with that speech in a peculiar manner. This speech, taken with the few lines of description with which Milton introduces it, embodies, in as short a space as possible, with as much perfection as possible, the delineation of the type of character common at all times, dangerous in many times; sure to come to the surface in moments of difficulty, and never more dangerous than then. As Milton describes it, it is one among several *typical* characters which will ever have their place in great councils, which will ever be heard at important decisions, which are part of the characteristic and inalienable whole of this statesmanlike world. The debate in Pandæmonium is a debate among these typical characters at the greatest conceivable crisis, and with adjuncts of solemnity which no other situation could rival. It is the greatest classical triumph, the highest achievement of the pure style in English literature; it is the greatest description of the highest and most typical characters with the most choice circumstances and in the fewest words.

It is not unremarkable that we should find in Milton and in "Paradise Lost" the best specimen of pure style. Milton was a schoolmaster in a pedantic age, and there is nothing so unclassical—nothing so impure in style—as pedantry. The out-of-door conversational life of Athens was as opposed to bookish scholasticism as a life can be. The most perfect books have been written not by those who thought much of books, but by those who thought little, by those who were under the restraint of a sensitive talking world, to which books had contributed something, and a various, eager life the rest. Milton is generally unclassical in spirit where he is learned, and naturally, because the purest poets do not overlay their conceptions with book-knowledge, and the classical poets having in comparison no books were under little temptation to

impair the purity of their style by the accumulation of their research. Over and above this, there is in Milton, and a little in Wordsworth also, one defect which is in the highest degree faulty and unclassical, which mars the effect and impairs the perfection of the pure style. There is a want of spontaneity, and a sense of effort. It has been happily said that Plato's words must have *grown* into their places. No one would say so of Milton or even of Wordsworth. About both of them there is a taint of duty; a vicious sense of the good man's task. Things seem right where they are, but they seem to be put where they are. Flexibility is essential to the consummate perfection of the pure style, because the sensation of the poet's efforts carries away our thoughts from his achievements. We are admiring his labours when we should be enjoying his words. But this is a defect in those two writers, not a defect in pure art. Of course it *is* more difficult to write in few words than to write in many; to take the best adjuncts, and those only, for what you have to say, instead of using all which comes to hand: it *is* an additional labour if you write verses in a morning, to spend the rest of the day in *choosing*, that is, in making those verses fewer. But a perfect artist in the pure style, is as effortless and as natural as in any style, perhaps is more so. Take the well-known lines:—

> "There was a little lawny islet
> By anemone and violet,
> Like mosaic, paven:
> And its roof was flowers and leaves
> Which the summer's breath enweaves,
> Where nor sun, nor showers, nor breeze,
> Pierce the pines and tallest trees,
> Each a gem engraven:
> Girt by many an azure wave
> With which the clouds and mountains pave
> A lake's blue chasm".[1]

Shelley had many merits and many defects. This is not the place for a complete, or indeed for any, estimate of him. But one excellence is most evident. His words are as flexible as any words; the rhythm of some modulating air seems to

[1] "The Isle."

move them into their place without a struggle by the poet, and almost without his knowledge. This is the perfection of pure art, to embody typical conceptions in the choicest, the fewest accidents, to embody them so that each of these accidents may produce its full effect, and so to embody them without effort.

The extreme opposite to this pure art is what may be called ornate art. This species of art aims also at giving a delineation of the typical idea in its perfection and its fulness, but it aims at so doing in a manner most different. It wishes to surround the type with the greatest number of circumstances which it will bear. It works not by choice and selection, but by accumulation and aggregation. The idea is not, as in the pure style, presented with the least clothing which it will endure, but with the richest and most involved clothing that it will admit.

We are fortunate in not having to hunt out of past literature an illustrative specimen of the ornate style. Mr. Tennyson has just given one admirable in itself, and most characteristic of the defects and the merits of this style. The story of "Enoch Arden," as he has enhanced and presented it, is a rich and splendid composite of imagery and illustration. Yet how simple that story is in itself! A sailor who sells fish, breaks his leg, gets dismal, gives up selling fish, goes to sea, is wrecked on a desert island, stays there some years, on his return finds his wife married to a miller, speaks to a landlady on the subject, and dies. Told in the pure and simple, the unadorned and classical style, this story would not have taken three pages, but Mr. Tennyson has been able to make it the principal—the largest tale in his new volume. He has done so only by giving to every event and incident in the volume an accompanying commentary. He tells a great deal about the torrid zone, which a rough sailor like Enoch Arden certainly would not have perceived; and he gives to the fishing village, to which all the characters belong, a softness and a fascination which such villages scarcely possess in reality.

The description of the tropical island on which the sailor is thrown, is an absolute model of adorned art:—

"The mountain wooded to the peak, the lawns
And winding glades high up like ways to Heaven,
The slender coco's drooping crown of plumes,
The lightning flash of insect and of bird,
The lustre of the long convolvuluses
That coil'd around the stately stems, and ran
Ev'n to the limit of the land, the glows
And glories of the broad belt of the world,
All these he saw; but what he fain had seen
He could not see, the kindly human face,
Nor ever hear a kindly voice, but heard
The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean-fowl,
The league-long roller thundering on the reef,
The moving whisper of huge trees that branch'd
And blossom'd in the zenith, or the sweep
Of some precipitous rivulet to the wave,
As down the shore he ranged, or all day long
Sat often in the seaward-gazing gorge,
A shipwreck'd sailor, waiting for a sail:
No sail from day to day, but every day
The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts
Among the palms and ferns and precipices;
The blaze upon the waters to the east;
The blaze upon his island overhead;
The blaze upon the waters to the west;
Then the great stars that globed themselves in Heaven,
The hollower-bellowing ocean, and again
The scarlet shafts of sunrise—but no sail".

No expressive circumstances can be added to this description, no enhancing detail suggested. A much less happy instance is the description of Enoch's life before he sailed:—

"While Enoch was abroad on wrathful seas,
Or often journeying landward; for in truth
Enoch's white horse, and Enoch's ocean spoil
In ocean-smelling osier, and his face,
Rough-redden'd with a thousand winter gales,
Not only to the market-cross were known,
But in the leafy lanes behind the down,
Far as the portal-warding lion-whelp,
And peacock yew-tree of the lonely Hall,
Whose Friday fare was Enoch's ministering".

So much has not often been made of selling fish. The essence of ornate art is in this manner to accumulate round the typical

object, everything which can be said about it, every associated thought that can be connected with it, without impairing the essence of the delineation.

The first defect which strikes a student of ornate art—the first which arrests the mere reader of it—is what is called a want of simplicity. Nothing is described as it is; everything has about it an atmosphere of something else. The combined and associated thoughts, though they set off and heighten particular ideas and aspects of the central and typical conception, yet complicate it: a simple thing—"a daisy by the river's brim"—is never left by itself, something else is put with it; something not more connected with it than "lion-whelp" and the "peacock yew-tree" are with the "fresh fish for sale" that Enoch carries past them. Even in the highest cases, ornate art leaves upon a cultured and delicate taste, the conviction that it is not the highest art, that it is somehow excessive and over-rich, that it is not chaste in itself or chastening to the mind that sees it—that it is in an explained manner unsatisfactory, "a thing in which we feel there is some hidden want!"

That want is a want of "definition". We must all know landscapes, river landscapes especially, which are in the highest sense beautiful, which when we first see them give us a delicate pleasure; which in some—and these the best cases—give even a gentle sense of surprise that such things should be so beautiful, and yet when we come to live in them, to spend even a few hours in them, we seem stifled and oppressed. On the other hand there are people to whom the sea-shore is a companion, an exhilaration; and not so much for the brawl of the shore as for the limited vastness, the finite infinite of the ocean as they see it. Such people often come home braced and nerved, and if they spoke out the truth, would have only to say, "We have seen the horizon line"; if they were let alone indeed, they would gaze on it hour after hour, so great to them is the fascination, so full the sustaining calm, which they gain from that union of form and greatness. To a very inferior extent, but still, perhaps, to an extent which most people understand better, a common arch will have the same effect.

A bridge completes a river landscape; if of the old and many-arched sort, it regulates by a long series of defined forms the vague outline of wood and river, which before had nothing to measure it; if of the new scientific sort, it introduces still more strictly a geometrical element; it stiffens the scenery which was before too soft, too delicate, too vegetable. Just such is the effect of pure style in literary art. It calms by conciseness; while the ornate style leaves on the mind a mist of beauty, an excess of fascination, a complication of charm, the pure style leaves behind it the simple, defined, measured idea, as it is, and by itself. That which is chaste chastens; there is a poised energy—a state half thrill, half tranquillity—which pure art gives, which no other can give; a pleasure justified as well as felt; an ennobled satisfaction at what ought to satisfy us, and must ennoble us.

Ornate art is to pure art what a painted statue is to an unpainted. It is impossible to deny that a touch of colour does bring out certain parts; does convey certain expressions; does heighten certain features, but it leaves on the work as a whole, a want, as we say, "of something"; a want of that inseparable chasteness which clings to simple sculpture, an impairing predominance of alluring details which impairs our satisfaction with our own satisfaction; which makes us doubt whether a higher being than ourselves will be satisfied even though we are so. In the very same manner, though the rouge of ornate literature excites our eye, it also impairs our confidence.

Mr. Arnold has justly observed that this self-justifying, self-proving purity of style is commoner in ancient literature than in modern literature, and also that Shakespeare is not a great or an unmixed example of it. No one can say that he is. His works are full of undergrowth, are full of complexity, are not models of style; except by a miracle, nothing in the Elizabethan age could be a model of style; the restraining taste of that age was feebler and more mistaken than that of any other equally great age. Shakespeare's mind so teemed with creation that he required the most just, most forcible, most constant restraint from without. He most needed to be

guided among poets, and he was the least and worst guided. As a whole no one can call his works finished models of the pure style, or of any style. But he has many passages of the most pure style, passages which could be easily cited if space served. And we must remember that the task which Shakespeare undertook was the most difficult which any poet has ever attempted, and that it is a task in which after a million efforts every other poet has failed. The Elizabethan drama—as Shakespeare has immortalised it—undertakes to delineate in five acts, under stage restrictions, and in mere dialogue, a whole list of *dramatis personæ*, a set of characters enough for a modern novel, and with the distinctness of a modern novel. Shakespeare is not content to give two or three great characters in solitude and in dignity, like the classical dramatists; he wishes to give a whole party of characters in the play of life, and according to the nature of each. He would "hold the mirror up to nature," not to catch a monarch in a tragic posture, but a whole group of characters engaged in many actions, intent on many purposes, thinking many thoughts. There is life enough, there is action enough, in single plays of Shakespeare to set up an ancient dramatist for a long career. And Shakespeare succeeded. His characters, taken *en masse*, and as a whole, are as well known as any novelist's characters; cultivated men know all about them, as young ladies know all about Mr. Trollope's novels. But no other dramatist has succeeded in such an aim. No one else's characters are staple people in English literature, hereditary people whom every one knows all about in every generation. The contemporary dramatists, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Marlowe, etc., had many merits, some of them were great men. But a critic must say of them the worst thing he has to say: "They were men who failed in their characteristic aim"; they attempted to describe numerous sets of complicated characters, and they failed. No one of such characters, or hardly one, lives in common memory; the "Faustus" of Marlowe, a really great idea, is not remembered. They undertook to write what they could not write—five acts full of real characters, and in consequence, the fine individual things they conceived are

forgotten by the mixed multitude, and known only to a few of the few. Of the Spanish theatre we cannot speak; but there are no such characters in any French tragedy: the whole aim of that tragedy forbad it. Goethe has added to literature a few great characters; he may be said almost to have added to literature the idea of "intellectual creation"—the idea of describing the great characters through the intellect; but he has not added to the common stock what Shakespeare added, a new multitude of men and women; and these not in simple attitudes, but amid the most complex parts of life, with all their various natures roused, mixed, and strained. The severest art must have allowed many details, much overflowing circumstance, to a poet who undertook to describe what almost defies description. Pure art would have commanded him to use details lavishly, for only by a multiplicity of such could the required effect have been at all produced. Shakespeare could accomplish it, for his mind was a spring, an inexhaustible fountain, of human nature, and it is no wonder that being compelled by the task of his time to let the fulness of his nature overflow, he sometimes let it overflow too much, and covered with erroneous conceits and superfluous images characters and conceptions which would have been far more justly, far more effectually, delineated with conciseness and simplicity. But there is an infinity of pure art in Shakespeare, although there is a great deal else also.

It will be said, if ornate art be, as you say, an inferior species of art, why should it ever be used? If pure art be the best sort of art, why should it not always be used?

The reason is this: literary art, as we just now explained, is concerned with literatesque characters in literatesque situations; and the *best* art is concerned with the *most* literatesque characters in the *most* literatesque situations. Such are the subjects of pure art; it embodies with the fewest touches, and under the most select and choice circumstances, the highest conceptions; but it does not follow that only the best subjects are to be treated by art, and then only in the very best way. Human nature could not endure such a critical commandment as that, and it would be an erroneous criticism which gave it.

Any literatesque character may be described in literature under *any* circumstances which exhibit its literatesqueness.

The essence of pure art consists in its describing what is as it is, and this is very well for what can bear it, but there are many inferior things which will not bear it, and which nevertheless ought to be described in books. A certain kind of literature deals with illusions, and this kind of literature has given a colouring to the name romantic. A man of rare genius, and even of poetical genius, has gone so far as to make these illusions the true subject of poetry—almost the sole subject.

"Without," says Father Newman, of one of his characters,[1] "being himself a poet, he was in the season of poetry, in the sweet spring-time, when the year is most beautiful because it is new. Novelty was beauty to a heart so open and cheerful as his; not only because it was novelty, and had its proper charm as such, but because when we first see things, we see them in a gay confusion, which is a principal element of the poetical. As time goes on, and we number and sort and measure things,—as we gain views, we advance towards philosophy and truth, but we recede from poetry.

"When we ourselves were young, we once on a time walked on a hot summer day from Oxford to Newington—a dull road, as any one who has gone it knows; yet it was new to us; and we protest to you, reader, believe it or not, laugh or not, as you will, to us it seemed on that occasion quite touchingly beautiful; and a soft melancholy came over us, of which the shadows fall even now, when we look back upon that dusty, weary journey. And why? because every object which met us was unknown and full of mystery. A tree or two in the distance seemed the beginning of a great wood, or park, stretching endlessly; a hill implied a vale beyond, with that vale's history; the bye-lanes, with their green hedges, wound on and vanished, yet were not lost to the imagination. Such was our first journey; but when we had gone it several times, the mind refused to act, the scene ceased to enchant, stern reality alone remained; and we thought it one of the most tiresome, odious roads we ever had occasion to traverse."

That is to say, that the function of the poet is to introduce a "gay confusion," a rich medley which does not exist in the actual world—which perhaps could not exist in any world—but which would seem pretty if it did exist. Every one who reads "Enoch Arden" will perceive that this notion of all poetry is exactly applicable to this one poem. Whatever be

[1] Charles Reding in *Loss and Gain*, vol. i., chap. iii.

made of Enoch's "Ocean spoil in ocean-smelling osier," of the "portal-warding lion-whelp, and the peacock yew-tree," every one knows that in himself Enoch could not have been charming. People who sell fish about the country (and that is what he did, though Mr. Tennyson won't speak out, and wraps it up) never are beautiful. As Enoch was and must be coarse, in itself the poem must depend for a charm on a "gay confusion"—on a splendid accumulation of impossible accessories.

Mr. Tennyson knows this better than many of us—he knows the country world; he has proved that no one living knows it better; he has painted with pure art—with art which describes what is a race perhaps more refined, more delicate, more conscientious, than the sailor—the "Northern Farmer," and we all know what a splendid, what a living thing, he has made of it. He could, if he only would, have given us the ideal sailor in like manner—the ideal of the natural sailor we mean—the characteristic present man as he lives and is. But this he has not chosen. He has endeavoured to describe an exceptional sailor, at an exceptionally refined port, performing a graceful act, an act of relinquishment. And with this task before him, his profound taste taught him that ornate art was a necessary medium—was the sole effectual instrument—for his purpose. It was necessary for him if possible to abstract the mind from reality, to induce us *not* to conceive or think of sailors as they are while we are reading of his sailors, but to think of what a person who did not know, might fancy sailors to be. A casual traveller on the sea-shore, with a sensitive mood and the romantic imagination Dr. Newman has described, might fancy, would fancy, a seafaring village to be like that. Accordingly, Mr. Tennyson has made it his aim to call off the stress of fancy from real life, to occupy it otherwise, to bury it with pretty accessories; to engage it on the "peacock yew-tree," and the "portal-warding lion-whelp". Nothing, too, can be more splendid than the description of the tropics as Mr. Tennyson delineates them, but a sailor would not have felt the tropics in that manner. The beauties of Nature would not have so much occupied him. He would have known little of the scarlet shafts of sunrise and nothing of the long con-

volvuluses. As in Robinson Crusoe, his own petty contrivances and his small ailments would have been the principal subject to him. "For three years," he might have said, "my back was bad; and then I put two pegs into a piece of drift-wood and so made a chair; and after that it pleased God to send me a chill." In real life his piety would scarcely have gone beyond that.

It will indeed be said, that though the sailor had no words for, and even no explicit consciousness of, the splendid details of the torrid zone, yet that he had, notwithstanding, a dim latent inexpressible conception of them: though he could not speak of them or describe them, yet they were much to him. And doubtless such is the case. Rude people are impressed by what is beautiful—deeply impressed—though they could not describe what they see, or what they feel. But what is absurd in Mr. Tennyson's description—absurd when we abstract it from the gorgeous additions and ornaments with which Mr. Tennyson distracts us—is, that his hero feels nothing else but these great splendours. We hear nothing of the physical ailments, the rough devices, the low superstitions, which really would have been the *first* things, the favourite and principal occupations of his mind. Just so when he gets home he *may* have had such fine sentiments, though it is odd, and he *may* have spoken of them to his landlady, though that is odder still,—but it is incredible that his whole mind should be made up of fine sentiments. Besides those sweet feelings, if he had them, there must have been many more obvious, more prosaic, and some perhaps more healthy. Mr. Tennyson has shown a profound judgment in distracting us as he does. He has given us a classic delineation of the "Northern Farmer" with no ornament at all—as bare a thing as can be—because he then wanted to describe a true type of real men: he has given us a sailor crowded all over with ornament and illustration, because he then wanted to describe an unreal type of fancied men,—not sailors as they are, but sailors as they might be wished.

Another prominent element in "Enoch Arden" is yet more suitable to, yet more requires the aid of, ornate art. Mr.

Tennyson undertook to deal with *half belief*. The presentiments which Annie feels are exactly of that sort which everybody has felt, and which every one has half believed—which hardly any one has more than half believed. Almost every one, it has been said, would be angry if any one else reported that he believed in ghosts; yet hardly any one, when thinking by himself, wholly disbelieves them. Just so such presentiments as Mr. Tennyson depicts, impress the inner mind so much that the outer mind—the rational understanding—hardly likes to consider them nicely or to discuss them sceptically. For these dubious themes an ornate or complex style is needful. Classical art speaks out what it has to say plainly and simply. Pure style cannot hesitate; it describes in concisest outline what is, as it is. If a poet really believes in presentiments he can speak out in pure style. One who could have been a poet—one of the few in any age of whom one can say certainly that they could have been and have not been—has spoken thus:—

"When Heaven sends sorrow,
Warnings go first,
Lest it should burst
With stunning might
On souls too bright
To fear the morrow.

"Can science bear us
To the hid springs
Of human things?
Why may not dream,
Or thought's day-gleam,
Startle, yet cheer?

"Are such thoughts fetters,
While faith disowns
Dread of earth's tones,
Recks but Heaven's call,
And on the wall,
Reads but Heaven's letters?" [1]

But if a poet is not sure whether presentiments are true or not true; if he wishes to leave his readers in doubt; if he wishes an atmosphere of indistinct illusion and of moving

[1] John Henry Newman's "Warnings".

shadow, he must use the romantic style, the style of miscellaneous adjunct, the style "which shirks, not meets" your intellect, the style which, as you are scrutinising, disappears.

Nor is this all, or even the principal lesson, which "Enoch Arden" may suggest to us, of the use of ornate art. That art is the appropriate art for an *unpleasing type*. Many of the characters of real life, if brought distinctly, prominently, and plainly before the mind, as they really are, if shown in their inner nature, their actual essence, are doubtless very unpleasant. They would be horrid to meet and horrid to think of. We fear it must be owned that Enoch Arden is this kind of person. A dirty sailor who did *not* go home to his wife is not an agreeable being: a varnish must be put on him to make him shine. It is true that he acts rightly; that he is very good. But such is human nature that it finds a little tameness in mere morality. Mere virtue belongs to a charity-school girl, and has a taint of the catechism. All of us feel this, though most of us are too timid, too scrupulous, too anxious about the virtue of others to speak out. We are ashamed of our nature in this respect, but it is not the less our nature. And if we look deeper into the matter there are many reasons why we should not be ashamed of it. The soul of man, and, as we necessarily believe, of beings greater than man, has many parts besides its moral part. It has an intellectual part, an artistic part, even a religious part, in which mere morals have no share. In Shakespeare or Goethe, even in Newton or Archimedes, there is much which will not be cut down to the shape of the commandments. They have thoughts, feelings, hopes—immortal thoughts and hopes—which have influenced the life of men, and the souls of men, ever since their age, but which the "whole duty of man," the ethical compendium, does not recognise. Nothing is more unpleasant than a virtuous person with a mean mind. A highly developed moral nature, joined to an undeveloped intellectual nature, an undeveloped artistic nature, and a very limited religious nature, is of necessity repulsive. It represents a bit of human nature—a good bit, of course—but a bit only—in disproportionate, unnatural, and revolting prominence; and therefore, unless an artist use

delicate care, we are offended. The dismal act of a squalid man needed many condiments to make it pleasant, and therefore Mr. Tennyson was right to mix them subtly and to use them freely.

A mere act of self-denial can indeed scarcely be pleasant upon paper. A heroic struggle with an external adversary, even though it end in a defeat, may easily be made attractive. Human nature likes to see itself look grand, and it looks grand when it is making a brave struggle with foreign foes. But it does not look grand when it is divided against itself. An excellent person striving with temptation is a very admirable being in reality, but he is not a pleasant being in description. We hope he will win and overcome his temptation; but we feel that he would be a more interesting being, a higher being, if he had not felt that temptation so much. The poet must make the struggle great in order to make the self-denial virtuous, and if the struggle be too great, we are apt to feel some mixture of contempt. The internal metaphysics of a divided nature are but an inferior subject for art, and if they are to be made attractive, much else must be combined with them. If the excellence of "Hamlet" had depended on the ethical qualities of Hamlet, it would not have been the masterpiece of our literature. He acts virtuously of course, and kills the people he ought to kill, but Shakespeare knew that such goodness would not much interest the pit. He made him a handsome prince and a puzzling meditative character; these secular qualities relieve his moral excellence, and so he becomes "nice". In proportion as an artist has to deal with types essentially imperfect, he must disguise their imperfections; he must accumulate around them as many first-rate accessories as may make his readers forget that they are themselves second-rate. The sudden *millionaires* of the present day hope to disguise their social defects by buying old places, and hiding among aristocratic furniture; just so a great artist who has to deal with characters artistically imperfect, will use an ornate style, will fit them into a scene where there is much else to look at.

For these reasons ornate art is, within the limits, as legi-

mate as pure art. It does what pure art could not do. The very excellence of pure art confines its employment. Precisely because it gives the best things by themselves and exactly as they are, it fails when it is necessary to describe inferior things among other things, with a list of enhancements and a crowd of accompaniments that in reality do not belong to it. Illusion, half belief, unpleasant types, imperfect types, are as much the proper sphere of ornate art, as an inferior landscape is the proper sphere for the true efficacy of moonlight. A really great landscape needs sunlight and bears sunlight; but moonlight is an equaliser of beauties; it gives a romantic unreality to what will not stand the bare truth. And just so does romantic art.

There is, however, a third kind of art which differs from these on the point in which they most resemble one another. Ornate art and pure art have this in common, that they paint the types of literature in a form as perfect as they can. Ornate art, indeed, uses undue disguises and unreal enhancements; it does not confine itself to the best types; on the contrary, it is its office to make the best of imperfect types and lame approximations; but ornate art, as much as pure art, catches its subject in the best light it can, takes the most developed aspect of it which it can find, and throws upon it the most congruous colours it can use. But grotesque art does just the contrary. It takes the type, so to say, *in difficulties*. It gives a representation of it in its minimum development, amid the circumstances least favourable to it, just while it is struggling with obstacles, just where it is encumbered with incongruities. It deals, to use the language of science, not with normal types but with abnormal specimens; to use the language of old philosophy, not with what Nature is striving to be, but with what by some lapse she has happened to become.

This art works by contrast. It enables you to see, it makes you see, the perfect type by painting the opposite deviation. It shows you what ought to be by what ought not to be; when complete, it reminds you of the perfect image, by showing you the distorted and imperfect image. Of this

art we possess in the present generation one prolific master. Mr. Browning is an artist working by incongruity. Possibly hardly one of his most considerable efforts can be found which is not great because of its odd mixture. He puts together things which no one else would have put together, and produces on our minds a result which no one else would have produced, or tried to produce. His admirers may not like all we may have to say of him. But in our way we too are among his admirers. No one ever read him without seeing not only his great ability but his great *mind*. He not only possesses superficial useable talents, but the strong something, the inner secret something, which uses them and controls them; he is great not in mere accomplishments, but in himself. He has applied a hard strong intellect to real life; he has applied the same intellect to the problems of his age. He has striven to know what *is:* he has endeavoured not to be cheated by counterfeits, not to be infatuated with illusions. His heart is in what he says. He has battered his brain against his creed till he believes it. He has accomplishments too, the more effective because they are mixed. He is at once a student of mysticism and a citizen of the world. He brings to the club-sofa distinct visions of old creeds, intense images of strange thoughts: he takes to the bookish student tidings of wild Bohemia, and little traces of the *demi-monde*. He puts down what is good for the naughty, and what is naughty for the good. Over women his easier writings exercise that imperious power which belongs to the writings of a great man of the world upon such matters. He knows women, and therefore they wish to know him. If we blame many of Browning's efforts, it is in the interest of art, and not from a wish to hurt or degrade him.

If we wanted to illustrate the nature of grotesque art by an exaggerated instance, we should have selected a poem which the chance of late publication brings us in this new volume. Mr. Browning has undertaken to describe what may be called *mind in difficulties*—mind set to make out the universe under the worst and hardest circumstances. He takes

"Caliban," not perhaps exactly Shakespeare's Caliban, but an analogous and worse creature; a strong thinking power, but a nasty creature—a gross animal, uncontrolled and unelevated by any feeling of religion or duty. The delineation of him will show that Mr. Browning does not wish to take undue advantage of his readers by a choice of nice subjects.

> "Will sprawl, now that the heat of day is best,
> Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
> With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his chin;
> And, while he kicks both feet in the cool slush,
> And feels about his spine small eft-things course,
> Run in and out each arm, and make him laugh;
> And while above his head a pompion plant,
> Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,
> Creeps down to touch and tickle hair and beard,
> And now a flower drops with a bee inside,
> And now a fruit to snap at, catch and crunch:"

This pleasant creature proceeds to give his idea of the origin of the Universe, and it is as follows. Caliban speaks in the third person, and is of opinion that the maker of the Universe took to making it on account of his personal discomfort:—

> "Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!
> 'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.
>
> "'Thinketh He made it, with the sun to match,
> But not the stars: the stars came otherwise;
> Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such as that:
> Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,
> And snaky sea which rounds and ends the same.
>
> "'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease:
> He hated that He cannot change His cold,
> Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy fish
> That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where she lived,
> And thaw herself within the lukewarm brine
> O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far amid,
> A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls of wave;
> Only she ever sickened, found repulse
> At the other kind of water, not her life,
> (Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o' the sun)
> Flounced back from bliss she was not born to breathe,
> And in her old bounds buried her despair,
> Hating and loving warmth alike: so He.

"'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun, this isle,
Trees and the fowls here, beast and creeping thing.
Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech;
Yon auk, one fire-eye, in a ball of foam,
That floats and feeds; a certain badger brown
He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedge eye
By moonlight; and the pie with the long tongue
That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,
And says a plain word when she finds her prize,
But will not eat the ants; the ants themselves
That build a wall of seeds and settled stalks
About their hole—He made all these and more,
Made all we see, and us, in spite: how else?"

It may seem perhaps to most readers that these lines are very difficult, and that they are unpleasant. And so they are. We quote them to illustrate, not the *success* of grotesque art, but the *nature* of grotesque art. It shows the end at which this species of art aims, and if it fails it is from over-boldness in the choice of a subject by the artist, or from the defects of its execution. A thinking faculty more in difficulties—a great type—an inquisitive, searching intellect under more disagreeable conditions, with worse helps, more likely to find falsehood, less likely to find truth, can scarcely be imagined. Nor is the mere description of the thought at all bad: on the contrary, if we closely examine it, it is very clever. Hardly any one could have amassed so many ideas at once nasty and suitable. But scarcely any readers—any casual readers—who are not of the sect of Mr. Browning's admirers will be able to examine it enough to appreciate it. From a defect, partly of subject, and partly of style, many of Mr. Browning's works make a demand upon the reader's zeal and sense of duty to which the nature of most readers is unequal. They have on the turf the convenient expression "staying power": some horses can hold on and others cannot. But hardly any reader not of especial and peculiar nature can hold on through such composition. There is not enough of "staying power" in human nature. One of his greatest admirers once owned to us that he seldom or never began a new poem without looking on in advance, and foreseeing with caution what length of intellectual adventure he was about to commence. Whoever will work hard at such poems

will find much mind in them: they are a sort of quarry of ideas, but whoever goes there will find these ideas in such a jagged, ugly, useless shape that he can hardly bear them.

We are not judging Mr. Browning simply from a hasty, recent production. All poets are liable to misconceptions, and if such a piece as "Caliban upon Setebos" were an isolated error, a venial and particular exception, we should have given it no prominence. We have put it forward because it just elucidates both our subject and the characteristics of Mr. Browning. But many other of his best known pieces do so almost equally; what several of his devotees think his best piece is quite enough illustrative for anything we want. It appears that on Holy Cross day at Rome the Jews were obliged to listen to a Christian sermon in the hope of their conversion, though this is, according to Mr. Browning, what they really said when they came away:—

> "Fee, faw, fum! bubble and squeak!
> Blessedest Thursday's the fat of the week.
> Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
> Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,
> Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime
> Gives us the summons—'t is sermon-time.
>
> "Boh, here's Barnabas! Job, that's you?
> Up stumps Solomon—bustling too?
> Shame, man! greedy beyond your years
> To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears?
> Fair play's a jewel! leave friends in the lurch?
> Stand on a line ere you start for the church.
>
> "Higgledy, piggledy, packed we lie,
> Rats in a hamper, swine in a stye,
> Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,
> Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve.
> Hist! square shoulders, settle your thumbs
> And buzz for the bishop—here he comes."

And after similar nice remarks for a church, the edified congregation concludes:—

> "But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock,
> And the rest sit silent and count the clock,

Since forced to muse the appointed time
On these precious facts and truths sublime,—
Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,
In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

"For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,
Called sons and sons' sons to his side,
And spoke, 'This world has been harsh and strange;
Something is wrong: there needeth a change.
But what, or where? at the last, or first?
In one point only we sinned, at worst.

"'The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
And again in his border see Israel set.
When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
The stranger-seed shall be joined to them:
To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.
So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

"'Ay, the children of the chosen race
Shall carry and bring them to their place:
In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,
When the slave enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
The oppressor triumph for evermore?

"'God spoke, and gave us the word to keep:
Bade never fold the hands nor sleep
'Mid a faithless world,—at watch and ward,
Till Christ at the end relieve our guard.
By His servant Moses the watch was set:
Though near upon cock-crow, we keep it yet.

"'Thou! if Thou wast He, who at mid watch came,
By the starlight, naming a dubious Name!
And if, too heavy with sleep—too rash
With fear—O Thou, if that martyr gash
Fell on Thee coming to take Thine own,
And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne—

"'Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.
But, the judgment over, join sides with us!
Thine too is the cause! and not more Thine
Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine,
Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed,
Who maintain Thee in word, and defy Thee in deed!

"'We withstood Christ then? be mindful how
At least we withstand Barabbas now!
Was our outrage sore? But the worst we spared,
To have called those—Christians, had we dared!
Let defiance to them pay mistrust of Thee,
And Rome make amends for Calvary!

"'By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
By the infamy, Israel's heritage,
By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
And the summons to Christian fellowship,—

"'We boast our proof that at least the Jew
Would wrest Christ's name from the Devil's crew.
Thy face took never so deep a shade
But we fought them in it, God our aid!
A trophy to bear, as we march, Thy band
South, East, and on to the Pleasant Land!'"

It is very natural that a poet whose wishes incline, or whose genius conducts, him to a grotesque art, should be attracted towards mediæval subjects. There is no age whose legends are so full of grotesque subjects, and no age whose real life was so fit to suggest them. Then, more than at any other time, good principles have been under great hardships. The vestiges of ancient civilisation, the germs of modern civilisation, the little remains of what had been, the small beginnings of what is, were buried under a cumbrous mass of barbarism and cruelty. Good elements hidden in horrid accompaniments are the special theme of grotesque art, and these mediæval life and legends afford more copiously than could have been furnished before Christianity gave its new elements of good, or since modern civilisation has removed some few at least of the old elements of destruction. A *buried* life like the spiritual mediæval was Mr. Browning's natural element, and he was right to be attracted by it. His mistake has been, that he has not made it pleasant; that he has forced his art to topics on which no one could charm, or on which he, at any rate, could not; that on these occasions and in these poems he has failed in fascinating men and women of sane taste.

We say "sane" because there is a most formidable and

estimable *insane* taste. The will has great though indirect power over the taste, just as it has over the belief. There are some horrid beliefs from which human nature revolts, from which at first it shrinks, to which, at first, no effort can force it. But if we fix the mind upon them they have a power over us just because of their natural offensiveness. They are like the sight of human blood: experienced soldiers tell us that at first men are sickened by the smell and newness of blood almost to death and fainting, but that as soon as they harden their hearts and stiffen their minds, as soon as they *will* bear it, then comes an appetite for slaughter, a tendency to gloat on carnage, to love blood, at least for the moment, with a deep, eager love. It is a principle that if we put down a healthy instinctive aversion, Nature avenges herself by creating an unhealthy insane attraction. For this reason, the most earnest truth-seeking men fall into the worst delusions; they will not let their mind alone; they force it towards some ugly thing, which a crochet of argument, a conceit of intellect recommends, and Nature punishes their disregard of her warning by subjection to the ugly one, by belief in it. Just so the most industrious critics get the most admiration. They think it unjust to rest in their instinctive natural horror: they overcome it, and angry Nature gives them over to ugly poems and marries them to detestable stanzas.

Mr. Browning possibly, and some of the worst of Mr. Browning's admirers certainly, will say that these grotesque objects exist in real life, and therefore they ought to be, at least may be, described in art. But, though pleasure is not the end of poetry, pleasing is a condition of poetry. An exceptional monstrosity of horrid ugliness cannot be made pleasing, except it be made to suggest—to recall—the perfection, the beauty, from which it is a deviation. Perhaps in extreme cases no art is equal to this; but then such self-imposed problems should not be worked by the artist; these out-of-the-way and detestable subjects should be let alone by him. It is rather characteristic of Mr. Browning to neglect this rule. He is the most of a realist, and the least of an idealist, of any poet we know. He evidently sympathises with some part at least of Bishop Blougram's apology. Anyhow this world exists,

"There *is* good wine—there *are* pretty women—there *are* comfortable benefices—there *is* money, and it is pleasant to spend it. Accept the creed of your age and you get these, reject that creed and you lose them. And for what do you lose them? For a fancy creed of your own, which no one else will accept, which hardly any one will call a 'creed,' which most people will consider a sort of unbelief." Again, Mr. Browning evidently loves what we may call the realism, the grotesque realism, of orthodox Christianity. Many parts of it in which great divines have felt keen difficulties are quite pleasant to him. He must *see* his religion, he must have an "object-lesson" in believing. He must have a creed that will *take*, which wins and holds the miscellaneous world, which stout men will heed, which nice women will adore. The spare moments of solitary religion —the "obdurate questionings," the high "instincts," the "first affections," the "shadowy recollections,"

> "Which, do they what they may,
> Are yet the fountain-light of all our day—
> Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;" [1]

the great but vague faith—the unutterable tenets—seem to him worthless, visionary; they are not enough "immersed in matter"; [2] they move about "in worlds not realised". We wish he could be tried like the prophet once; he would have found God in the earthquake and the storm; he would have deciphered from them a bracing and a rough religion: he would have known that crude men and ignorant women felt them too, and he would accordingly have trusted them; but he would have distrusted and disregarded "the still small voice": he would have said it was "fancy"—a thing you thought you heard to-day, but were not sure you had heard to-morrow: he would call it a nice illusion, an immaterial prettiness; he would ask triumphantly, "How are you to get the mass of men to heed this little thing?" he would have persevered and insisted, "*My wife* does not hear it".

But although a suspicion of beauty, and a taste for ugly reality, have led Mr. Browning to exaggerate the functions and

[1] Wordsworth: "Intimations of Immortality," ix.

[2] *Locke on the Human Understanding*, book iv., chap. iii., 1, 2.

to caricature the nature of grotesque art, we own, or rather we maintain, that he has given many excellent specimens of that art within its proper boundaries and limits. Take an example, his picture of what we may call the *bourgeois* nature in *difficulties;* in the utmost difficulty, in contact with magic and the supernatural. He has made of it something homely, comic, true; reminding us of what *bourgeois* nature really is. By showing us the type under abnormal conditions, he reminds us of the type under its best and most satisfactory conditions:—

"Hamelin Town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its walls on the southern side;
A pleasanter spot you never spied;
But when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

"Rats!
They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cook's own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats,
By drowning their speaking,
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

"At last the people in a body
To the Town Hall came flocking:
'Tis clear,' cried they, 'our Mayor's a noddy;
And as for our Corporation—shocking,
To think we buy gowns lined with ermine,
For dolts that can't or won't determine
What's best to rid us of our vermin!
You hope, because you're old and obese,
To find in the furry civic robe ease?
Rouse up, sirs! Give your brains a racking
To find the remedy we're lacking,
Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!'
And at this the Mayor and the Corporation
Quaked with a mighty consternation."

A person of musical abilities proposes to extricate the civic dignitaries from the difficulty, and they promise him a thousand guilders if he does.

"Into the street the Piper stept,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
And green and blue his sharp eye twinkled,
Like a candle-flame when salt is sprinkled;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered
You heard as if an army muttered;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling:
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers.
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
Families by tens and dozens.
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing
Until they came to the river Weser,
Wherein all plunged and perished!
—Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,
Swam across and lived to carry
(As he, the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary:
Which was, 'At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
Into a cider-press's gripe:
And a moving away of pickle-tub boards,
And a leaving ajar of conserve cupboards,
And a drawing the corks of train-oil flasks,
And a breaking the hoops of butter casks;
And it seemed as if a voice
(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
Is breathed) called out, Oh rats, rejoice!
The world is grown to one vast drysaltery

So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!
And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
All ready staved, like a great sun shone
Glorious scarce an inch before me,
Just as methought it said, Come bore me!
—I found the Weser rolling o'er me.'
You should have heard the Hamelin people
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
'Go,' said the Mayor, 'and get long poles,
Poke out the nests and block up the holes!
Consult with carpenters and builders,
And leave in our town not even a trace
Of the rats!' when suddenly up the face
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a 'First, if you please, my thousand guilders!'

"A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue;
So did the Corporation too.
For council dinners made rare havoc
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;
And half the money would replenish
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!
'Beside,' quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,
'Our business was done at the river's brink;
We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
And what's dead can't come to life, I think.
So friend, we're not the folks to shrink
From the duty of giving you something for drink,
And a matter of money to put in your poke;
But as for the guilders, what we spoke
Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.
A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!'

"The Piper's face fell, and he cried,
'No trifling! I can't wait, beside!
I've promised to visit by dinner-time
Bagdat, and accept the prime
Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
Of a nest of scorpions no survivor—
With him I proved no bargain-driver.

With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!
And folks who put me in a passion
May find me pipe to another fashion.'

"'How?' cried the Mayor, 'd'ye think I'll brook
Being worse treated than a Cook?
Insulted by a lazy ribald
With idle pipe and vesture piebald?
You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,
Blow your pipe there till you burst!'

"Once more he stept into the street;
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
Never gave the enraptured air)
There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering,
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
Out came the children running.

"All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

. . . . . .

"And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there's a tribe
Of alien people that ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbours lay such stress
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterraneous prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why they don't understand."

Something more we had to say of Mr. Browning, but we must stop. It is singularly characteristic of this age that the poems which rise to the surface should be examples of ornate

art, and grotesque art, not of pure art. We live in the realm of the *half* educated. The number of readers grows daily, but the quality of readers does not improve rapidly. The middle class is scattered, heedless; it is well-meaning, but aimless; wishing to be wise, but ignorant how to be wise. The aristocracy of England never was a literary aristocracy, never even in the days of its full power, of its unquestioned predominance, did it guide—did it even seriously try to guide—the taste of England. Without guidance young men, and tired men, are thrown amongst a mass of books; they have to choose which they like; many of them would much like to improve their culture, to chasten their taste, if they knew how. But left to themselves they take, not pure art, but showy art; not that which permanently relieves the eye and makes it happy whenever it looks, and as long as it looks, but *glaring* art which catches and arrests the eye for a moment, but which in the end fatigues it. But before the wholesome remedy of nature—the fatigue arrives—the hasty reader has passed on to some new excitement, which in its turn stimulates for an instant, and then is passed by for ever. These conditions are not favourable to the due appreciation of pure art—of that art which must be known before it is admired—which must have fastened irrevocably on the brain before you appreciate it—which you must love ere it will seem worthy of your love. Women too, whose voice on literature counts as well as that of men—and in a light literature counts for more than that of men—women, such as we know them, such as they are likely to be, ever prefer a delicate unreality to a true or firm art. A dressy literature, an exaggerated literature seem to be fated to us. These are our curses, as other times had theirs.

"And yet
Think not the living times forget,
Ages of heroes fought and fell,
That Homer in the end might tell;
O'er grovelling generations past
Upstood the Doric fane at last;
And countless hearts on countless years
Had wasted thoughts, and hopes, and fears,
Rude laughter and unmeaning tears;

Ere England Shakespeare saw, or Rome
The pure perfection of her dome.
Others I doubt not if not we,
The issue of our toils shall see ;
Young children gather as their own
The harvest that the dead had shown,
The dead forgotten and unknown." [1]

[1] *The Poems and Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough*, vol. ii., p. 472.

CÆSARISM AS IT EXISTED IN 1865.

[Lest the letters written on the French *coup d'état* of 1851 should be supposed to express Mr. Bagehot's complete and final judgment on the character of the imperial *régime* of Louis Napoleon, it has been thought well to publish a paper which he contributed to the *Economist* after a visit to France in 1865, of a nature to correct the misapprehensions to which the somewhat youthful essays which precede might give rise. It appeared soon after the publication of the Emperor's Life of Julius Cæsar.]

THAT the French Emperor should have spare leisure and unoccupied reflection to write a biography, is astonishing, but if he wished to write a biography, his choice of a subject is very natural. Julius Cæsar was the first who tried on an imperial scale the characteristic principles of the French Empire,—as the first Napoleon revived them, as the third Napoleon has consolidated them. The notion of a demagogue ruler, both of a fighting demagogue and a talking demagogue, was indeed familiar to the Greek Republics; but their size was small, and their history unemphatic. On the big page of universal history, Julius Cæsar is the first instance of a democratic despot. He overthrew an aristocracy—a corrupt, and perhaps effete, aristocracy, it is true, but still an aristocracy—by the help of the people, of the unorganised people. He said to the numerical majority of Roman citizens: "I am your advocate and your leader: make me supreme, and I will govern for your good, and in your name". This is exactly the principle of the French Empire. No one will ever make an approach to understanding it, who does not separate it altogether, and on principle, from the despotisms of feudal origin and legitimate pretensions. The old Monarchies claim the obedience of the people upon grounds of duty. They say they have consecrated claims to the loyalty of mankind. They appeal to conscience, even to religion. But Louis Napoleon is a Benthamite despot. He is for the

"greatest happiness of the greatest number". He says: "I am where I am, because I know better than any one else what is good for the French people, and they know that I know better". He is not the Lord's anointed; he is the people's agent.

We cannot here discuss what the effect of this system was in ancient times. These columns are not the best place for a historical dissertation; but we may set down very briefly the results of some close and recent observation of the system as it now exists, as it is at work in France. Part of its effects are well understood in England, but a part of them are, we think, but mistily seen and imperfectly apprehended.

In the first place, the French Empire is really the *best finished* democracy which the world has ever seen. What the many at the moment desire is embodied with a readiness, and efficiency, and a completeness which has no parallel, either in past history or present experience. An absolute Government with a popular instinct has the unimpeded command of a people renowned for orderly dexterity. A Frenchman will have arranged an administrative organisation really and effectually, while an Englishman is still bungling and a German still reflecting. An American is certainly as rapid, and in some measure as efficient, but his speed is a little headlong, and his execution is very rough; he tumbles through much, but he only tumbles. A Frenchman will not hurry; he has a deliberate perfection in detail, which may always be relied on, for it is never delayed. The French Emperor knows well how to use these powers. His bureaucracy is not only endurable, but pleasant. An idle man who wants his politics done for him, has them done for him. The welfare of the masses—the present good of the present multitude—is felt to be the object of the Government and the law of the polity. The Empire gives to the French the full gratification of their main wishes, and the almost artistic culture of an admirable workmanship, of an administration finished as only Frenchmen can finish it, and as it never was finished before.

It belongs to such a Government to care much for material prosperity, and it does care. It makes the people as comfort-

able as they will permit. If they are not more comfortable, it is their own fault. The Government would give them free-trade, and consequent diffused comfort, if it could. No former French Government has done as much for free-trade as this Government. No Government has striven to promote railways, and roads, and industry, like this Government. France is much changed in twelve years. Not exactly by the mere merit of the Empire, for it entered into a great inheritance; it succeeded to the silent work of the free monarchy which revolution had destroyed and impeded. There were fruitful and vigorous germs of improvement ready to be elicited—ready to start forth—but under an unintelligent Government they would not have started forth; they would have lain idle and dead, but under the adroit culture of the present Government, they have grown so as to amaze Europe and France itself.

If, indeed, as is often laid down, the *present happiness* of the greatest number was the characteristic object of the Government, it would be difficult to make out that any probable French Government would be better, or indeed nearly so good, as the present. The intelligence of the Emperor on economical subjects—on the bread and meat of the people—is really better than that of the classes opposed to him. He gives the present race of Frenchmen more that is good than any one else would give them, and he gives it them in their own name. They have as much as they like of all that is good for them. But if, not the present happiness of the greatest number, but *their future elevation*, be, as it is, the true aim and end of Government, our estimate of the Empire will be strangely altered. It is an admirable Government for present and coarse purposes, but a detestable Government for future and refined purposes.

In the first place, it stops the *teaching apparatus;* it stops the effectual inculcation of important thought upon the mass of mankind. All other mental effort but this, the Empire not only permits, but encourages. The high intellect of Paris is as active, as well represented, as that of London, and it is even more keen. Intellect still gives there, and has always given, a distinctive position. To be a *Membre de l'Institut* is a recognised place in France; but in London, it is an ambiguous

distinction to be a "clever fellow". The higher kinds of thought are better discussed in Parisian society than in London society, and better argued in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* than in any English periodical. The speculative thought of France has not been killed by the Empire; it is as quick, as rigorous, as keen as ever. But though still alive, it is no longer powerful; it cannot teach the mass. The *Revue* is permitted, but newspapers—effectual newspapers—are forbidden. A real course of free lectures on popular subjects would be impossible in Paris. *Agitation* is forbidden, and it is agitation, and agitation alone, which teaches. The crude mass of men bear easily philosophical treatises, refined articles, elegant literature; there are but two instruments penetrative enough to reach their opaque minds—the newspaper article and the popular speech, and both of these are forbidden.

In London the reverse is true. We may say that only the loudest sort of expression is permitted to attain its due effect. The popular organs of literature so fill men's minds with incomplete thoughts that deliberate treatment, that careful inquiry, that quiet thought, have no hearing. People are so deafened with the loud reiteration of many half-truths, that they have neither curiosity nor energy for elaborate investigation. The very word "elaborate" is become a reproach; elaboration produces something which the mass of men do not like, because it is above them,—which is tiresome, because it needs industry,—difficult, because it wants attention,—complicated, because it is true. On the whole, perhaps, English thought has rarely been so unfinished, so piecemeal, so *ragged* as it is now. We have so many little discussions, that we get no full discussion; we eat so many sandwiches, that we spoil our dinner. And on the Continent, accordingly, the speculative thought of England is despised. It is believed to be meagre, uncultivated, and immature. We have only a single compensation. Our thought may be poor and rough and fragmentary, but it is effectual. With our newspapers and our speeches—with our clamorous multitudes of indifferent tongues—we beat the ideas of the few into the minds of the many. The head of France is a better head than ours, but it does not move her limbs. The head of

England is in comparison a coarse and crude thing, but rules her various frame and regulates her whole life.

France, *as it is*, may be happier because of the Empire, but France *in the future* will be more ignorant because of the Empire. The daily play of the higher mind upon the lower mind is arrested. The present Government has given an instalment of free-trade, but it could not endure an agitation for free-trade. A democratic despotism is like a theocracy; it assumes its own correctness. It says: "I am the representative of the people; I am here because I know what they wish, because I know what they should have". As Cavaignac once said: "A Government which permits its principles to be questioned is a lost Government". All popular discussion whatever which aspires to *teach* the Government is radically at issue with the hypothesis of the Empire. It says that the Cæsar, the omniscient representative, is a mistaken representative, that he is not fit to be Cæsar.

The deterioration of the future is one inseparable defect of the imperial organisation, but it is not the only one,—for the moment, it is not the greatest. The greatest is the corruption of the present. A greater burden is imposed by it upon human nature than human nature will bear. Everything requires the support, aid, countenance of the central Government, and yet that Government is expected to keep itself pure. Concessions of railways, concessions of the privilege of limited liability,—on a hundred subjects, legal permission, administrative help, are necessary to money-making. You concentrate upon a small body of leading official men the power of making men's fortunes, and it is simple to believe they will not make their own fortunes. The very principle of the system is to concentrate power, and power is money. Sir Robert Walpole used to say, "No honest man could be a 'Minister'"; and in France the temptations would conquer all men's honesty. The system requires angels to work it, and perhaps it has not been so fortunate as to find angels. The nod of a minister on the Bourse is a fortune, and somehow or other ministers make fortunes. The Bourse of Paris is still so small, that a leading capitalist may produce a great impression on it, and a leading capitalist

working with a great minister, a vast impression. Accordingly, all that goes with sudden wealth; all that follows from the misuse of the two temptations of civilisation, money and women, is concentrated round the Imperial court. The Emperor would cure much of it if he could, but what can he do? They say he has said that he will not change his men. He will not substitute fleas that are hungry for fleas which at least are partially satisfied. He is right. The defect belongs to the system, not to these men; an enormous concentration of power in an industrial system ensures an accumulation of pecuniary temptation.

These are the two main disadvantages which France suffers from her present Government; the greater part of the price which she has to pay for her present happiness. She endures the daily presence of an efficient immorality; she sacrifices the educating apparatus which would elevate Frenchmen yet to be born. But these two disadvantages are not the only ones.

France gains the material present, but she does not gain the material future. All that secures present industry, her Government confers; in whatever needs confidence in the future she is powerless. *Credit* in France, to an Englishman's eye, has almost to be created. The *country* deposits in the Bank of France are only £1,000,000 sterling; that bank has fifty-nine branches, is immeasurably the greatest country bank in France. All discussions on the currency come back to the *cours forcé*, to the inevitable necessity of making inconvertible notes an irrefusable tender during a revolution. If you propose the simplest operations of credit to a French banker, he says: "You do not remember 1848; I do". And what is the answer? The present Government avowedly depends on, is ostentatiously concentrated in, the existing Cæsar. Its existence depends on the permanent occupation of the Tuileries by an extraordinary man. The democratic despot—the representative despot—must have the sagacity to divine the people's will and the sagacity to execute it. What is the likelihood that these will be hereditary? Can they be expected in the next heirs—a child for Emperor, and a woman for Regent? The present happiness of France is happiness on a short life-

lease; it may end with the life of a man who is not young, who has not spared himself, who has always thought, who has always *lived*.

Such are the characteristics of the Empire as it is. Such is the nature of Cæsar's Government as we know it at the present. We scarcely expect that even the singular ability of Napoleon III. will be able to modify, by a historical retrospect, the painful impressions left by actual contact with a living reality.[1]

[1] [As a curious illustration of Mr. Bagehot's estimate of the character of the third Empire, I may mention that all the earlier part of this paper, all that which dwelt on the good side of the imperial *régime* in relation to matters of material prosperity, was reproduced in the French official journals, while all the equally true and even more useful criticism on its moral deficiencies, was carefully omitted.—Note by R. H. HUTTON.]

MR. COBDEN.

(1865.)

TWENTY-THREE years ago—and it is very strange that it should be so many years—when Mr. Cobden first began to hold Free-trade meetings in the agricultural districts, people there were much confused. They could not believe the Mr. Cobden they saw to be the "Mr. Cobden that was in the papers". They expected a burly demagogue from the North, ignorant of rural matters, absorbed in manufacturing ideas, appealing to class-prejudices—hostile and exciting hostility. They saw "a sensitive and almost slender man, of shrinking nerve, full of rural ideas, who proclaimed himself the son of a farmer, who understood and could state the facts of agricultural life far better than most agriculturists, who was most anxious to convince every one of what he thought the truth, and who was almost more anxious not to offend any one". The tradition is dying out, but Mr. Cobden acquired, even in those days of Free-trade agitation, a sort of agricultural popularity. He excited a personal interest, he left what may be called a *sense* of himself among his professed enemies. They were surprised at finding that he was not what they thought; they were charmed to find that he was not what they expected; they were fascinated to find what he was. The same feeling has been evident at his sudden death—a death at least which was to the mass of occupied men sudden. Over political Belgravia—the last part of English society Mr. Cobden ever cultivated—there was a sadness. Every one felt that England had lost an individuality which it could never have again, which was of the highest value, which was in its own kind altogether unequalled.

What used to strike the agricultural mind, as different from what they fancied, and most opposite to a Northern agitator,

was a sort of playfulness. They could hardly believe that the lurking smile, the perfectly magical humour which they were so much struck by, could be that of a "Manchester man". Mr. Cobden used to say, "I have as much right as any man to call myself the representative of the tenant farmer, for I am a farmer's son,—I am the son of a Sussex farmer". But agriculturists keenly felt that this was not the explanation of the man they saw. Perhaps they could not have thoroughly explained, but they perfectly knew that they were hearing a man of singular and most peculiar genius, fitted as if by "natural selection" for the work he had to do, and not wasting a word on any other work or anything else, least of all upon himself.

Mr. Cobden was very anomalous in two respects. He was a sensitive agitator. Generally, an agitator is a rough man of the O'Connell type, who says anything himself, and lets others say anything. You "peg into me and I will peg into you, and let us see which will win," is his motto. But Mr. Cobden's habit and feeling were utterly different. He never spoke ill of any one. He arraigned principles, but not persons. We fearlessly say that after a career of agitation of thirty years, not one single individual has—we do not say a valid charge, but a producible charge—a charge which he would wish to bring forward against Mr. Cobden. You cannot find the man who says, "Mr. Cobden said this of me, and it was not true". This may seem trivial praise, and on paper it looks easy. But to those who know the great temptations of actual life it means very much. How would any other great agitator, O'Connell or Hunt or Cobbett look, if tried by such a test? Very rarely, if even ever in history, has a man achieved so much by his words —been victor in what was thought at the time to be a class-struggle—and yet spoken so little evil as Mr. Cobden. There is hardly a word to be found, perhaps, even now, which the recording angel would wish to blot out. We may on other grounds object to an agitator who lacerates no one, but no watchful man of the world will deny that such an agitator has vanquished one of life's most imperious and difficult temptations.

Perhaps some of our readers may remember as vividly as

we do a curious instance of Mr. Cobden's sensitiveness. He said at Drury Lane Theatre, in tones of feeling, almost of passion, curiously contrasting with the ordinary coolness of his nature, "I could not serve with Sir Robert Peel". After more than twenty years, the curiously thrilling tones of that phrase still live in our ears. Mr. Cobden alluded to the charge which Sir Robert Peel had made, or half made, that the Anti-Corn-Law League and Mr. Cobden had, by their action and agitation, conduced to the actual assassination of Mr. Drummond, his secretary, and the intended assassination of himself—Sir Robert Peel. No excuse or palliation could be made for such an assertion except the most important one, that Peel's nerves were as susceptible and sensitive as Mr. Cobden's. But the profound feeling with which Mr. Cobden spoke of it is certain. He felt it as a man feels an unjust calumny, an unfounded stain on his honour.

Mr. Disraeli said on Monday night[1] (and he has made many extraordinary assertions, but this is about the queerest), "Mr. Cobden had a profound reverence for tradition". If there is any single quality which Mr. Cobden had not, it was traditional reverence. But probably Mr. Disraeli meant what was most true, that Mr. Cobden had a delicate dislike of offending other men's opinions. He dealt with them tenderly. He did not like to have his own creed coarsely attacked, and he did—he could not help doing—as he would be done by; he never attacked any man's creed coarsely or roughly, or in any way except by what he in his best conscience thought the fairest and justest argument. This sensitive nature is one marked peculiarity in Mr. Cobden's career as an agitator, and another is, that he was an agitator for men of business.

Generally speaking, occupied men charged with the responsibilities and laden with the labour of grave affairs are jealous of agitation. They know how much may be said against any one who is responsible for anything. They know how unanswerable such charges nearly always are, and how false they easily may be. A capitalist can hardly help thinking, "Suppose a man was to make a speech against my mode

[1] The day after Cobden's death.

of conducting my own business, how much would he have to say!" Now it is an exact description of Mr. Cobden, that by the personal magic of a single-minded practicability he made men of business abandon this objection. He made them rather like the new form of agitation. He made them say, "How business-like, how wise, just what it would have been right to do".

Mr. Cobden of course was not the discoverer of the Free-trade principle. He did not first find out that the Corn-laws were bad laws. But he was the most effectual of those who discovered how the Corn-laws were to be repealed, how Free-trade was to change from a doctrine of *The Wealth of Nations* into a principle of tariffs and a fact of real life. If a thing was right, to Mr. Cobden's mind it ought to be done; and as Adam Smith's doctrines were admitted on theory, he could not believe that they ought to lie idle, that they ought to be "bedridden in the dormitory of the understanding".

Lord Houghton once said, "In my time political economy books used to begin, 'Suppose a man on an island'". Mr. Cobden's speeches never began so. He was altogether a man of business speaking to men of business. Some of us may remember the almost arch smile with which he said "the House of Commons does not seem quite to understand the difference between a cotton mill and a print work". It was almost amusing to him to think that the first assembly of the first mercantile nation could be, as they were and are, very dim in their notions of the most material divisions of their largest industry. It was this evident and first-hand familiarity with real facts and actual life which enabled Mr. Cobden to inspire a curiously diffused confidence in all matter-of-fact men. He diffused a kind of "economic faith". People in those days had only to say, "Mr. Cobden said so," and other people went and "believed it".

Mr. Cobden had nothing classical in the received sense about his oratory; but it is quite certain that Aristotle, the greatest teacher of the classical art of rhetoric, would very keenly have appreciated his oratory. This sort of economic faith is exactly what he would most have valued, what he most

prescribed. He said: "A speaker should convince his audience that he was a likely person to know". This was exactly what Mr. Cobden did. And the matter-of-fact philosopher would have much liked Mr. Cobden's habit of "coming to the point". It would have been thoroughly agreeable to his positive mind to see so much of clear, obvious argument. He would not, indeed, have been able to conceive a "League Meeting". There has never, perhaps, been another time in the history of the world when excited masses of men and women hung on the words of one talking political economy. The excitement of these meetings was keener than any political excitement of the last twenty years, keener infinitely than any which there is now. It may be said, and truly, that the interest of the subject was Mr. Cobden's felicity, not his mind; but it may be said with equal truth that the excitement was much greater when he was speaking than when any one else was speaking. By a kind of keenness of nerve, he said the exact word most fitted to touch, not the bare abstract understanding, but the quick individual perceptions of his hearers.

We do not wish to make this article a mere panegyric. Mr. Cobden was far too manly to like such folly. His mind was very peculiar, and like all peculiar minds had its sharp limits. He had what we may call a supplementary understanding, that is, a bold, original intellect, acting on a special experience, and striking out views and principles not known to or neglected by ordinary men. He did not possess the traditional education of his country, and did not understand it. The solid heritage of transmitted knowledge has more value, we believe, than he would have accorded to it. There was too a defect in business faculty not identical, but perhaps not altogether without analogy. The late Mr. James Wilson used to say, "Cobden's administrative power I do not think much of, but he is most valuable in counsel, always original, always shrewd, and not at all extreme". He was not altogether equal to meaner men in some beaten tracks and pathways of life, though he was far their superior in all matters requiring an original stress of speculation, an innate energy of thought.

It may be said, and truly said, that he has been cut off

before his time. A youth and manhood so spent as his, well deserved a green old age. But so it was not to be. He has left us, quite independently of his positive works, of the repeal of the Corn-laws, of the French treaty, a rare gift—the gift of a unique character. There has been nothing before Richard Cobden like him in English history, and perhaps there will not be anything like him. And his character is of the simple, emphatic, picturesque sort which most easily, when opportunities are given as they were to him, goes down to posterity. May posterity learn from him! Only last week we hoped to have learned something ourselves:—

> "But what is before us we know not,
> And we know not what shall succeed".[1]

[1] Matthew Arnold, "The Future".

LORD PALMERSTON.

(1865.)

LORD PALMERSTON only died on Wednesday, and already the world is full of sketches and biographies of him. It is very natural that it should be so, for he counted for much in English politics: his personality was a power, and it is natural that every one should, at his death, seek to analyse what we used to have, and what we have now lost. We will do so, but, remembering how often the tale has been told, we will be as brief as possible.

Lord Derby happily said that he was born in the "pre-scientific" period, and Lord Palmerston was so born, or even more. He was, it is true, a boarder at Dugald Stewart's, and we believe transcribed at least a part of the lectures on political economy of that philosopher, lately published. But the combined influence of interior nature and the surrounding situation was too strong. His real culture was that of living languages and the actual world. He was the best French scholar among his contemporaries—so much so that when he went to Paris in 1859, the whole society, which fancied he was an imperious and ignorant Englishman, was charmed by the grace of his expression. His English in all his speeches was sound and pure, and in his greater efforts almost fastidiously correct. The feeling for language, which is one characteristic of a great man of the world, was very nice in Lord Palmerston, and very characteristic.

It was from the actual knowledge of men—from close specific contact—that Lord Palmerston derived his data. We have heard grave men say with surprise, "He always has an anecdote to cap his argument. He begins, 'I knew a man once,'" and the anecdotes had no trace of the garrulity of age,

they were real illustrations of the matter in hand. They were the chosen instances of a man who thought in instances. Some think, as the philosophers say, by "definition," others by "type". Lord Palmerston, like an animated man used to the animated world, thought in examples, and hardly realised abstract words.

It was because of this that in international matters—the only ones for which in youth he cared—he was a great practical lawyer. He knew what hardly any one knows, the subject-matter. He knew the cases with which during a long life he had to deal. To most men international law is a matter of precedent and words; to him it was a matter of personal adventure and reality. Some people not unqualified to judge have said that his opinion on such matters was as good as any law officer's. He might not have studied Vattel or Wheaton so closely as some, but he had, what is far better, followed with a keen interest the actual and necessary practice of present nations.

It was this sort of worldly sympathy and worldly education which gave Lord Palmerston his intelligibility. He was not a common man, but a common man might have been cut out of him. He had in him all that a common man has, and something more. And he did not at all despise, as some philosophers teach people to do, the common part of his mind. He was profoundly aware that the common mass of plain sense is the great administrative agency of the world; and that if you keep yourself in sympathy with this you win, and if not you fail. Sir George Lewis used to say that as Demosthenes declared action to be the first, second, and third thing in a statesman, so intelligibility is the first, second, and third thing in a constitutional statesman. It is to us certainly the first, second, and third thing in Lord Palmerston. This is not absolutely eulogistic. No one resembled less than Lord Palmerston the fancied portrait of an ideal statesman laying down in his closet plans to be worked out twenty years hence. He was a statesman for the moment. Whatever was not wanted now, whatever was not practicable now, whatever would not take now, he drove quite out of his mind. The prerequisites of a con-

stitutional statesman have been defined as the "powers of a first-rate man, and the creed of a second-rate man".[1] The saying is harsh, but it is expressive. Lord Palmerston's creed was never the creed of the far-seeing philosopher; it was the creed of a sensible and sagacious but still commonplace man. His objects were common objects: what was uncommon was the will with which he pursued them.

No man was better in action, but no man was more free from the pedantry of business. People, he has been heard to say, have different minds. "When I was a young man, the Duke of Wellington made an appointment with me at half-past seven in the morning, and some one asked me, Why, Palmerston, how will you keep that engagement? Oh, I said, of course, the easiest thing in the world. I shall keep it the last thing before I go to bed." He knew that the real essence of work is concentrated energy, and that people who really have that in a superior degree by nature, are independent of the forms and habits and artifices by which less able and active people are kept up to their labours.

Lord Palmerston prided himself on his foreign policy, on which we cannot now pronounce a judgment. But it is not upon this that his fame will rest. He had a great difficulty as a Foreign Minister. He had no real conception of any mode of life except that with which he was familiar. His idea, his fixed idea, was that the Turks were a highly improving and civilised race, and it was impossible to beat into him their essentially barbaric and unindustrial character. He would hear anything patiently, but no corresponding ideas were raised in his mind. A man of the world is not an imaginative animal, and Lord Palmerston was by incurable nature a man of the world: keenly detective in what he could realise by experience —utterly blind, dark, and impervious to what he could not so realise. Even the best part of his foreign policy was alloyed with this defect. The mantle of Canning had descended on him, and the creed and interests of Canning. He was most eager to use the strong influence of England to support free institutions—to aid "the Liberal party" was the phrase in those

[1] Bagehot's own words, see Vol. ii., page 183.

days—everywhere on the Continent. And no aim could be juster and better—it was the best way in which English strength could be used. But he failed in the instructed imagination and delicate perception necessary to its best attainment. He supported the Liberal party when it was bad, and the country unfit for it, as much as when it was good and the nation eager for it. He did not define the degree of his sympathy, or apportion its amount to the comparative merits of the different claims made on it. According to the notions of the present age, too, foreign policy should be regulated by abstract, or at least comprehensive, principles, but Lord Palmerston had no such principles. He prided himself on his exploits in Europe, but it is by his instincts in England that he will be remembered.

It was made a matter of wonder that Lord Palmerston should begin to rule the House of Commons at seventy, and there is no doubt that he was very awkward at first in so ruling it. Sir James Graham, and other judges of business management, predicted that "the thing would fail," and that a new Government would have to be formed. But the truth is, that though he had been fifty years in the House of Commons, Lord Palmerston had never regularly attended it, and even still less attended to it. His person had not been there very much, and his mind had been there very little. He answered a question on his own policy, or made a speech, and then went away. Debate was not to him, as to Mr. Pitt or Mr. Gladstone, a matter of life and pleasure. Mr. Canning used to complain, "I can't get that three-decker Palmerston to bear down". And when he was made leader of the House, it came out that he hardly knew, if he did know, the forms of the House. But it was a defect of past interest, not a defect of present capacity. He soon mastered the necessary knowledge, and as soon as he had done so the sure sagacity of his masculine instincts secured him an unconquerable strength.

Something we wished to say more on these great gifts, and something, too, might be said as to the defects by which they were alloyed. But it is needless. Brevity is as necessary in a memorial article as in an epitaph. So much is certain, we

shall never look upon his like again. We may look on others of newer race, but his race is departed. The merits of the new race were not his merits; their defects are not his. England will never want statesmen, but she will never see in our time such a statesman as Viscount Palmerston.

BOSCASTLE.[1]

(1866.)

WHATEVER doubt there may be as to the truth of Mr. Darwin's speculations on other points, there is no doubt that they are applicable to the coast cliffs of North Cornwall. No doubt every cliff owes its being to natural selection. All the weak rocks have been worn away by ages of conflict with the whole Atlantic, and only the strong rocks are left. They often are worn, too, into shapes resembling the spare and gigantic veterans of many wars; wherever the subtle ocean detected a bit of soft stone, it set to and wore it away, so that the grim masses which stand are all granite—the "bones and sinews" of geology. The peculiarity of the coast, among other beautiful ones, is that it is a mere coast;—the picturesque stops at the cliff line. In the adjacent coast of north and west the high hills of the interior send down many streams, which in the course of ages have hollowed out deep valleys and softened with woody banks the wild and stony fields. But Cornwall is a thin county, has no deep interior to be a source of big streams, and the little ones which trickle forth have to rush over a rock too hard and too bleak for them to wear it into delicate valleys. But the shore line is charming, not only because the waves swell with the force of the full ocean, while the bays are scooped and the rocks scarred by its incessant hand—its careful hand, I had almost said, so minute and pervading are its touches—but the hard grey rock of the shore also contributes much to make *clean foam*. The softer rocks always mix something of their own alloy with the pure sea, but the grey

[1] This and the article on Mr. Grote have been recovered from the *Spectator*, and are now republished by the kind permission of the proprietors of that newspaper. That on Boscastle appeared in the *Spectator* of 22nd September, 1866.—E. BAGEHOT.

grit here has no discolouring power; the white line of spray dances from headland to headland as pure and crystal-like as if it had not touched the earth.

But I have no intention of wearying you with a description of scenery. The sea-shore is a pretty thing, but it is not a discovery of my own. The coast is very curious, I do not mean in those ante-Roman remains which your most learned contributor has so well described. I cannot presume to tell you whether in truth in this place, as in so many others, according to the last ideas and perhaps the hardest terms of ethnology, the dolichokephalic race of men attacked and extirpated the brachykephalic, or short-headed, ten thousand years before history began. Anyhow, if the theory is true, it must have been cold work on these cliffs and moors, when you picked up mussels and (if possible) crayfish, and cut skins, if you had any, into clothes with a blunt flint, when fire had just come in as a new and (Conservative thought!) suspicious thing, and tattooing was still the best of the fine arts. The year A.D. 1866 has defects, but it is better certainly than the B.C. 18,660, if the human races were really about then. But, as I said, I cannot deal with such matters; I have only a little to say about the changes of life and civilisation which this coast marks in the last century or two.

We are familiar with the present state of trade, and with the phenomena it creates and the conditions it requires. It shows itself to the eye at once in immense warehouses, cities spreading over miles and miles, and not seeming even to anticipate a boundary, a population daily streaming from the thinly-inhabited outskirts, and daily concentrating itself more and more in the already thronged cities. Commerce gives much to those who have much, and from such as have little it takes that little away. But the prerequisites of our commerce are of recent growth, and our ancestors even lately did not possess them. They are—large and ready capital, rapid and cheap land carriage, the power of making great breakwaters to keep out storms, the power of making large docks to hold many vessels, the ability to protect and the confidence to amass great wealth close to the sea-shore. But a very few

generations ago these gifts were wanting. It was useless to bring all merchandise to one port, for when there you could not use it; no railway and no canal distributed bulky articles; they had to be brought by water to the nearest possible market; they might nearly as well have staid where they were grown, if they had to be conveyed a hundred or two hundred miles when here. All our great protective works against the sea, all our great accumulative works at the great ports, are modern in the strictest sense, post-modern, as geologists would say, part of the "drift" of this age.

But though in theory we know these things, yet they come upon us with a sudden completeness when we see the sort of place our ancestors thought a port. Boscastle is as good an example of their idea as can be found. It is a creek shaped like a capital S, with, I should think, the earliest and smallest breakwater on record just about the middle. The sea runs with great violence on all this coast, and no open bay is safe for a moment. But the turn or crook of the Boscastle creek, which I have endeavoured to describe by likening it to the letter S, in a great measure protects it, and even early masons were able to run out on the solid rock some few feet of compact stones, which help to add to the shelter. The whole creek is never nearly as broad as Regent Street, and it gradually runs away to be narrower than the Strand, while at the point of the breakwater there is a real Temple Bar, which hardly seems wide enough for a ship at all. The whole thing, when you first look down on it, gives you the notion that you are looking at a big port through a diminishing glass, so complete is the whole equipment, and yet so absurdly disproportionate, according to our notions, is the size. The principal harbour of Lilliput probably had just this look. But though its size across is small, the rocks which make its jaws are very formidable, and the sea foams against them in an unpleasant manner. I suppose we ought to think much of the courage with which sailors face such dangers and of the feelings of their wives and families when they wait the return of their husbands and fathers; but my City associations at once carried me away to the poor underwriter who should insure against

loss at such a place. How he would murmur, "Oh! my premium," as he saw the ship tossing up to the great black rock and the ugly breakwater, and seeming likely enough to hit both. I shall not ask at Lloyds' what is the rate for Boscastle rocks, for I remember the grave rebuke I once got from a serious underwriter when I said some other such place was pretty. "Pretty! I should think it was," he answered; "why it is lined with our money!"

But our ancestors had no choice but to use such places. They could not make London and Liverpool; they had not the money; what wealth existed was scattered all over the country; the central money market was not. There was no use in going to the goldsmiths who made Lombard Street to ask for a couple of millions to make docks or breakwaters, even if our science could have then made large specimens of the latter, which it could not. And, as I said before, these large emporia when made would have been quite useless; the auxiliary facilities which alone make such places serviceable did not exist. The neighbourhoods of Bideford and Boscastle had then to trust to Bideford and Boscastle; they had no access to London or Liverpool; they relied on their local port, and if that failed them had no resource or substitute.

The fringe of petty ports all over our coasts serves to explain the multitudes of old country houses, in proportion to the populations of old times, which are mouldering in out-of-the-way and often very ugly places. The tourist thinks—how did people come to build in such an inaccessible and unpicturesque place? But few of our old gentry cared for what we now call the beauties of nature; they built on their own estates when they could, and if those estates were near some wretched little haven they were much pleased. The sea was the railway of those days; it brought, as it did to Ellangowan in Dirk Hatteraick's time, brandy for the men and "pinners" for the women to the lonest of coast castles. According to popular belief, King Arthur himself thus lived. The famous castle of Tintagel hangs over the edge of a cliff, right over the next little bay to that of Boscastle—a very lone place, where a boat could get out to sea if the pilot knew the place, but